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Official Magazine Australia

ISSUE 61 NOVEMBER 2011
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- Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning
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THE LORD OF THE RINGS WAR IN THE NORTH™

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PlayStation 3



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Modern Warfare 3 52

OPS spends some quality time with the latest entry in the biggest entertainment franchise of all time: *Modern Warfare 3*. Read on to see if it has the chops to keep the franchise on the up and up.

WIN!
A DRIVER:
SAN FRANCISCO
PACK
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Mass Effect 3

Commander Shepard is poised to finish the fight

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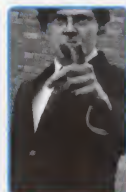
Dan Staines
Acting Deputy Editor
How the hell does Catwoman keep herself warm? Surely that zipper's defective...
Playing: *Batman: AC*
Wanting: *Skyrim*



Stephanie Goh
Art Director
Splitting my gaming time between the PS3 and the Mac this month. *Diablo III* beta is looking amazing!
Playing: *Just Cause 2*
Wanting: *Skyrim*



Adam Mathew
Associate Editor
I've successfully been out of the country just as much as I've been in it. Airport staff know me by name!
Playing: *SFIII: Third Strike*
Wanting: *Skyrim*



James Cottee
Contributor
Someone else has snaffled *Monster Hunter* for their handheld? I can still play it on Vita, right? Right??
Playing: *El Shaddai*
Wanting: *Monster Hunter Vita*



James Ellis
Contributor
I have ventured deep into my *Deus Ex* gaming cocoon. Disturb me and you'll score a poke in the eye.
Playing: *Deus Ex: HR*
Wanting: *Mass Effect 3*



Nathan Lawrence
Contributor
What's worse than playing terrible games? Having to split time between too many great titles. Sad face.
Playing: *Dead Island*
Wanting: *Battlefield 3*



Dave Kozicki
Contributor
Forget double D's, I'm all about triple D's namely *Deus Ex*, *Dead Island* and *Driver*
Playing: *D games*
Wanting: *Saints Row The Third*



Toby McCasker
Contributor
Been all about *Deus Ex's* smexy cyberpunk charms this month. Adam Jensen; coolest man in gaming, surely.
Playing: *Deus Ex: HR*
Wanting: *Skyrim*



Angry Sackboy
Contributor
Ever since the official FemShep was announced he's been making shooty, wooshing space sounds.
Playing: *Mass Effect 2*
Wanting: *Mass Effect 3*

Editorial



Hi there. New face at the top of the page this issue, as the guy who steered this fine vessel for the last two or so years, Luke Reilly, has departed for the online world of videogame journalism. He's left *OPS* in fine shape and, going by this month's prosperous bounty of new games, it's only going to get better.

We'll wait here while you flick through the meat in the middle of the mag to

check it out – the last few months were skinny but now times are fat. We're fairly pleased there aren't movie tie-ins between these pages. It's a punishing time for wallets nationwide and it's only going to get tougher in the coming months as *Battlefield 3*, *Modern Warfare 3*, *Uncharted 3*, *Skyrim* and more appear on shelves.

Frankly we have no idea how the individuals here are going to spend their leisure time on these titles, nor what the average consumer's going to do – how much spare time do you really have? Do you dive in and snap up everything, wait until prices drop, or even go for a secondhand copy?

More and more publishers are actively dissuading consumers from choosing the latter option by implementing an online pass, a one-time use card with a unique code included in the game box that's then locked to your PSN account. While a new copy of a game comes with the code to enable full and unlimited online play, for example, the next person who gets that particular disc is either going to have to go without a significant portion of the product or stump up an extra \$10 or so to go online.

The reasoning behind it from a developer and publisher point of view is that people are getting a free ride by not paying them for the experience they've worked so hard on. As we noted elsewhere, Guillaume de Fondaumiere from Quantic Dream believes that the studio is down €5 to €10 million (\$6.63 to \$13.27 million) because used copy sales of *Heavy Rain* robbed them of royalties. It's bit of a leap in my eyes, as this doesn't take into account gamers lending their friends a copy, or even rentals.

Consumers get understandably cranky when they take home a game and discover they need to pay even more money for something they just bought. However, when you're buying a disc all you're buying is the licence to use that bit of software, not a totally tangible product.

It doesn't seem fair. Solutions? Dropping the price of games so everyone can play without going for a secondhand copy might be good start. Let us know what you think.

Paul Taylor
Acting Editor

Playing: *Driver: San Francisco*
Wanting: *Battlefield 3*

SPEAK WITH US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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OUT NOVEMBER 2011
sonicthehedgehog.com/generations

2D image of Nintendo 3DS game



Bounce, spin and dash in nonstop platforming action as Classic Sonic



Experience super sonic speed as you grind, slide and boost as Modern Sonic



Extend the adventure with new features and environments on the Nintendo 3DS



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PSPE1000 SPECS

Dimensions: Approx. 172.4 × 73.4 × 21.6 mm
(width × height × depth)

Weight: 223 grams

Display: 4.3-inch LCD, 16.7 million colours

Sound: Monaural speaker, headset jack

Media: UMD drive in read-only mode, Memory Stick PRO Duo with USB 2.0 transfer speed

Supported video formats: UMD, H.264/MPEG-4 AVC Main Profile Level 3

Supported audio formats: H.264/MPEG-4 AVC Main Profile Level 3, Linear PCM, ATAC3plus

Power: Lithium-ion battery with AC adapter

PS3 SALES SURGE

Plus new PSP inbound!

On the back of a rather substantial price cut introduced at the end of August, Sony Computer Entertainment Australia (SCEA) has revealed that sales of PlayStation 3 have increased by a whopping 400 per cent. The 160GB model PS3 is now available for \$349.95 and the 320GB model selling for just \$100 more, this markdown constitutes a \$150 discount on the former recommended retail price – a substantial saving in anyone's book.

Given the PS3's considerable cross-media capabilities and extensive library of first- and third-party titles (including a remarkably strong end-of-year line-up), it's little wonder Australian consumers have responded to the price drop so enthusiastically. As SCEA Managing Director Michael Ephraim explains, "Australians love not only games, but also the quality home entertainment PS3 provides. Sales are booming because PlayStation 3 is the best device to connect to your TV, at incredible value, to provide the ultimate home entertainment experience."

But it's not just PS3 that's getting all the love. In a surprise announcement at this year's Gamescom event in Cologne, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE) President and CEO Jim Ryan revealed a new budget model PSP – the PSPE1000. With an estimated RRP of \$139.95, the diminutive portable drops Wi-Fi support and stereo sound in favour of a more compact design and reduced weight. However, unlike the PSP Go, the E1000 does feature a UMD drive and full-size 4.3 inch display. It also has a rather swanky charcoal-black matte finish, making it (in our view) the most attractive iteration of the PSP to date.

"PSP has sold over 71 million units worldwide, and is now the perfect entry-level handheld device," said Ryan. "But we believe we can do more to support PSP. So with the new value priced [model] and our ever increasing range of PSP Essentials Software, portable gaming has never been so accessible."

No firm release date has been set for the E1000, but our sources tell us to expect it to hit shelves before the end of Spring.

iViva Vita!

This year's Gamescom saw a veritable cornucopia of tasty new Vita games. Here's a selection of the best for your delectation. (Note: all release dates are TBC.)



▲ Uncharted: Golden Abyss

Developer: Sony Bend Genre: Action-adventure

Originally revealed at this year's E3, *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* once again sees series protagonist Nathan Drake embarking on a quest to solve an ancient historical mystery and – hopefully – snag some sweet treasure on the way. In the E3 demo, a thoroughly unlikeable new character by the name of Jason Dante was revealed. At Gamescom, we were introduced to the much more pleasant (and attractive) Marissa Chase. According to writer John Garvin, the complicated relationship that develops between Drake, Chase, and Dante plays a pivotal role in *Golden Abyss*' narrative, making this *Uncharted* one of the most tense and emotionally rewarding instalments in the series to date. Sweeeeeeet.



▲ Reality Fighters

Developer: Novarama Genre: Fighting

Using the Vita's inbuilt digital camera, *Reality Fighters* lets you map your face onto an in-game avatar and then duke it out in augmented reality arenas with other face-mapped fighters. As well as scanning in their mugs, players can also customise their character with a selection of body types, outfits, and fighting styles. Combat seems a little clunky at the moment, but this is early days yet, so we're confident things will improve between now and when the game comes out next year.



▲ Resistance: Burning Skies

Developer: Nihilistic Software Genre: Shooter

Placing players in the shoes of veteran fire-fighter Tom Riley, *Burning Skies* chronicles the Chimeran invasion of New York City and features the same frenetic over-the-top gunplay for which the *Resistance* series is renowned. Of particular interest is the inclusion of touch controls: using the Vita's touch-screen, players can guide the trajectory of grenades, switch weapons, and activate alt-firing modes. As you'd expect, the visuals in *Burning Skies* are spectacular and compare favourably with the PS3 instalments. Based on what we've seen, we reckon this has all the hallmarks of a killer app.

Escape Plan

Developer: Fun Bits Interactive Genre: Puzzle

Now this looks interesting. *Escape Plan* is a puzzle game starring two adorably expressive rubbery protagonists: lithe little Lil and her corpulent companion Laarg. The goal is to guide this resourceful duo through a variety of strange and beautiful environments, making use of their respective skills to overcome deadly obstacles and reach the exit. Stylistically, *Escape Plan* is outstanding – with an artfully understated black & white aesthetic and fastidious attention to detail, it's easily one of the best looking games we've seen on Vita. Funny too, what with all the slapstick mishaps and so forth.

◀ Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 4 Golden

Developer: Atlus Genre: RPG

Okay, so this was technically announced after Gamescom wrapped up, but omigod it looks so freakin' rad that we just had to include it. A revamped port of the incredible PS2 original, *Persona 4: Golden* will feature a new character, new personas, new outfits, new dungeons, new dialogue, new cut-scenes, and – of course – swanky new graphics. If the PSP port of *Persona 3* is anything to go by, this will be an absolute must-have, so it better get a local release or we will be LIVID.

In Short

A brief look at this month's news



- ▶ Sega has revealed that a new instalment of its long-running **Super Monkey Ball** franchise is in development for Vita. Slated to launch with the console, it'll make use of both analogue sticks, the touch screen, and probably the gyroscope as well. No word on monkey bowling yet, so fingers crossed.
- ▶ Quantic Dream co-founder Guillaume de Fondaumiere claims **Heavy Rain** lost over a million sales to the second-hand games market. "It's a million people playing my game without giving me one cent," he said.
- ▶ A new **Syndicate** is on the way. Developed by Starbreeze (*Riddick, The Darkness*) and published by EA, it'll reinvent the ageing strategy classic as a "fast paced, futuristic, action shooter." Because goodness knows we haven't got enough shooters already.
- ▶ Conspicuously absent from this year's **Tokyo Game Show**, Sony has assured gamers that Team Ico's hotly anticipated *Last Guardian* is still in development and on track to deliver "the very best gaming experience possible." Hooray!
- ▶ Popular sci-fi shooter **Crysis** is coming to PSN. According to developer Crytek, the port will feature updated graphics, a revamped interface, and full stereoscopic 3D support.
- ▶ **Max Payne 3** has a release date (of sorts): March 2012.
- ▶ Ubisoft is running a talent quest to find a vocalist to sing the theme song for **Assassin's Creed Revelations**. The winner will receive US\$1000 and a mention in the game's credits.
- ▶ A kart-racing game based on DreamWorks properties is in development. Called **Super Star Kartz** (...) the game will feature an array of characters pulled from popular DreamWorks films, including *Shrek*, *Madagascar*, and *Monsters vs. Aliens*.
- ▶ Plastic, developer of 2008 PSN game **Linger in Shadows**, is making a new title for Move with the help of Sony's Santa Monica studio. Not sure what it's about yet, but a mysterious teaser video features a human hand touching things in a forest, suggesting... actually, we have no idea what it suggests. Ideas, anyone?
- ▶ According to Capcom, **Dead Rising 2: Off The Record** will halve the torturously long load times of its otherwise excellent predecessor.
- ▶ Determined to avoid a repeat of this year's disastrous PSN hack attacks, Sony has hired ex-Homeland Security chief and hacking expert **Philip Reittinger** as vice-president of its cyber-security division. Great move, Sony.
- ▶ Following its successful "pick your favourite FemShep" campaign, **Mass Effect** developer BioWare is again seeking fan feedback, this time for a planned statuette of Asari scientist/serial love-interest Liara T'soni. Made by Japanese toy maker Kotobuklya, the prototype depicts Lara as a 'bishjou' or 'pretty woman' – which is basically a nice way of saying she has enormous knockers.
- ▶ Sony's **Rob Dyer** has accused Microsoft of "protecting inferior technology" due to the latter's admission that it reserves the right to deny games an Xbox Live Arcade release if they launch on PSN first.



"It's our hope that whoever we release this to first **will make a high-quality game in record time.**"

▶ INTERVIEW

Unlimited Detail, Unlimited Possibilities

Imagine: a graphics engine 100,000 times more powerful than anything else out there, running smoothly on current-gen technology. Sounds impossible, right? Not so, says Euclidean's **Bruce Dell**. He tells us everything about his revolution-in-the-making.

OPS: So how did you get it into your head to go make a revolutionary 3D graphics engine?

Bruce Dell: I used to make little 2D games — lots of them — and when games went 3D I was sad. I thought "Oh nope, I can't do this. I'm not smart. I'll never be able to do this." Then one day I had some weird idea in my head and I looked at it and thought "I wonder if that would make 3D?" I tried a little something and I was very stubborn and I didn't give up. It was three years before I saw anything working in 3D (and that was on my Amiga 500) and by the time I did have something I realised that it was very different from what everyone else had.

OPS: How long have you been working on it?

BD: Shamefully, since the time I was seventeen. I'm thirty-three now, so quite a while, but originally it was just a hobby and I didn't actually expect it to go anywhere. Eventually it turned out that I was onto something that was doing stuff that couldn't be done at the time.

OPS: How long do you think it will be until the average console gamer is going to see this on their system?

BD: I have a figure in my head, but I am forbidden to say it. That figure is, I hope, a lot less than a year, at least on our side, for the SDK. How slow games developers are on their side is another thing. But they do say that if an artist is completely free and not restricted by a polygon budget he works two to three times quicker. If he doesn't have to build the same object four times for different distance models, that makes him faster again. He could also scan objects [with a laser scanner] instead of spending two weeks to make them. So it's our hope that whoever we release this to first will make a high quality game in record time.

OPS: Critics have been quick to point out that voxel-based engines such as Unlimited Detail are notoriously bad at handling complex animations. How do you respond to that?

BD: When it comes to animation, we want to save some things — the directors want some "stuff" for our next demo. Still, we wanted to show *something* and I think [the demo we showed at] Gamescom got a very good reception from developers and from... I can't say "console people", because there's only three and you'll know at least some of them were involved. So for the record, the fact that we have no animation and no physics to show right now [means that] when we release a real-time demo with those things in the future, it will be great for some more attention.

OPS: How scalable is Unlimited Detail?

BD: We have what we call "universal scalability". With present tech, if I make the game on PS3 and I make some characters, then I can't reuse those graphics for the Wii because the polygon count is too high. An example of this would be *Force Unleashed*, they needed a few different companies to make three different versions for each system because Darth Vader and his Stormtroopers couldn't be reused on a [less powerful] system. However, point cloud data scales as easily as a bitmap image.

OPS: How big is the team at Euclidean?

BD: There are nine of us, but we are enlarging the team significantly so that we can move as quick as we can. With the recent tragedy of the THQ closures in Australia there are plenty of good people around...

OPS: Just THQ? Any ex-Team Bondi staff?


BD: Anyone. Anyone who is good. Come to us. We're looking for good people. It's very sad what has happened recently in the Aussie games industry, but it is good for us to pick up good people. I mean, if we continue to expand we want to get all of them, eventually. It is the hope that we continue to get bigger and bigger. Because if Australia can't compete in terms of programming and art because the dollar is too high compared to the US or China, then just like the car industry (where we used to make cars here, but that moved to the developing world) we can still lead in other ways. It's sort of like in America where they [don't build] but still design cars, and they've managed to stay in control that way.

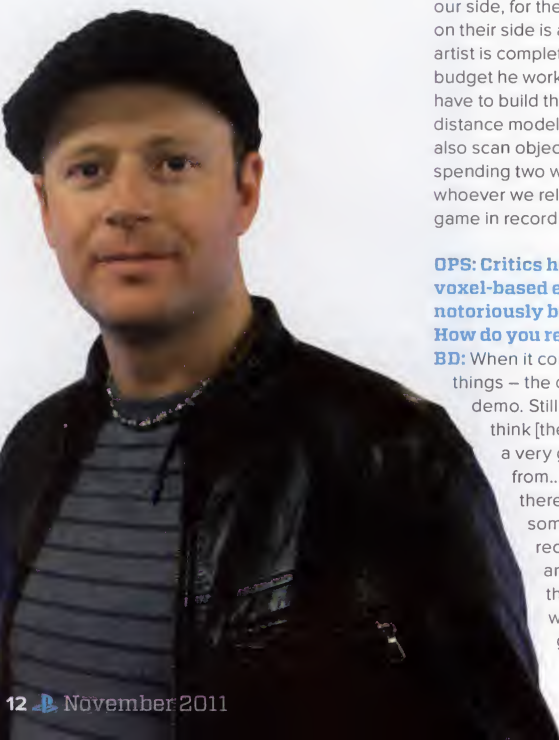
Likewise with the games industry having all the problems it's had, if in the future it becomes impossible to profitably make a game in Australia, then if we take a new place as the ones who are making the technologies that are used in these games, then we have a good future ahead of us.

OPS: Do you have plans for being more than a middleware vendor? Any desire to make your own games with Unlimited Detail?

BD: I personally would say that I would want to, but I also have directors and other people to appease. For now I'll just make demos. If eventually we rolled into making full games, that would be very nice, but that's a big if.

OPS: So what's the plan now? Are you guys going to disappear for another year?

BD: Yes, disappear. Hopefully for much less than a year. We do have some really good stuff coming. We've just teamed up with people on the art side of things who will really improve things. We have the ability to run anything, so now we just need good stuff to run! 



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PlayStation 3



Bethesda

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INTERVIEW

Grand slamming the opposition

Thomas Singleton, line producer for *Grand Slam Tennis 2*, shares how EA's upcoming tennis title is set to humble the opposition

OPS: What's the greatest new feature of *Grand Slam Tennis 2*?

TS: Our number one innovation is swinging the racquet like a grand slam champion. Total Racquet Control is where it's at. It's probably the first innovation in a long time in the tennis category. So the buttons are gone and we're able to swing the racquet using the right analogue stick. It's simple, it's intuitive, it's pick up and play and it's awesome.

OPS: Can the old-school, stubborn gamer go back to using buttons?

TS: Absolutely. We didn't want to cut them off!

OPS: Total Racquet Control sounds great. What about 'Total Navigation Control', too?

TS: Our navigation system is one that gives you just enough assistance that you don't need to worry about being in a precise location. When we were developing this product we actually started off with full navigation... what a disaster. Because the game we're making isn't about 'Total Navigation Control'; it's about Total Racquet Control. We found that complete navigation control is something that the consumer doesn't want to worry about.

OPS: That sounds very accessible, but what about the hardcore players?

TS: The hardcore player gets depth within the layers of the gameplay onion. First and foremost, difficulty. Their opponents are going to play a lot tougher; they're going to have a tendency to draw you into the net in order to lob balls over your head, like any serve-and-volley-style player would do. There is definitely depth within the controls as well. All of the tennis tactics within our Pro AI system are also your personal tactics within the actual gameplay system.

OPS: What were some of the challenges of developing for Move?

TS: Much like any gesture-based game, people have a perception that the hardware should do one-to-one recognition. Move is a great device, it works very well with our software, however, there's only so much we can do on both sides.

OPS: What about some triumphs of working with Move?

TS: For a game like tennis there isn't a better fit. So putting a racquet in the palm of your hand and literally swinging. It's very pick up and play, it's very literal and it's very gesture based.

OPS: How do you elevate a game derived from a sport that doesn't change much year to year?

TS: We feel that we've got some game changers definitely, in Total Racquet Control, the new Pro AI system, our presentation visually and audibly that definitely set us above and beyond where the competition has been to date.

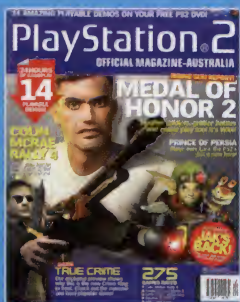
OPS: On the topic of competition, what have you learned from *Top Spin*?

TS: *Top Spin 4* has undone a lot of the series' mistakes in trying to make things simpler; however, they're still using buttons. I like our roster [compared to theirs]. We also have the venues that matter. They do some other things well—we do those things better—and innovation has not been present in how many iterations since the original *Top Spin* game because using buttons is a thing of the past. ▶

OPS VAULT

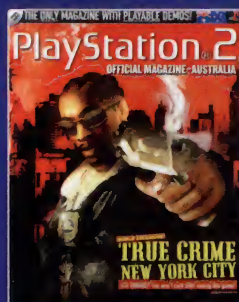
2003 ▶

We were giving away the punchline on the cover of this eight-year-old issue, with a proud '10/10 review!' for *Jak II Renegade*. We're fairly confident that you'd go nuts for a HD re-release, though. In between the covers we thought *SSX 3* was "so hot it's melting the polar ice caps", nabbing a solid 8, while the medical-sounding *XGRA: Extreme G Racing Association* left us cold, limping home with a 6 tucked under its arm never to be seen again. The drawcard, though, was a dense *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun* feature. Seems like that it's a franchise that comes in regular cycles (see far right).



2005 ▶

No, the cover isn't scuffed, it's meant to look like that as we went behind the scenes of *True Crime: New York City*. A game with big names behind the characters, including Laurence 'Don't Confuse Me For Samuel L. Jackson' Fishburne and Christopher 'What's My Tagline' Walken. We also triumphed *Driver: Parallel Lines* for (somewhat) going back to its roots (note: *San Francisco* actually does), applauded *Rugby League 2* and panned *Sonic Gems Collection*. However, we were pretty excited about seeing *Sonic* on the PS3. Seems like *Sonic*'s finally on track to getting it right six years later with *Generations*.



2010 ▶

This time last year was all about beards (*Medal of Honor* review), babes (Catwoman in *Batman Arkham City*) and boots (*FIFA 11*, *PES 2011* and *Rugby League Live* all reviewed). For that last lot and just for fun, see if you can match the quote to the game: "Acquire on sight"; "On the park it just isn't clever" and; "We're going to lose our biscuits if he keeps banging on about our sloppy play-the-balls." Also, another massive *GT5* preview. Incidentally it's lucky we finished that feature since we were all covered in drool.



► IN YOUR FACE

Are brick and mortar game stores on the brink of extinction?

Does digital distribution and e-commerce mean the end for traditional retailers?



Dan Staines

YES

Dan is a lazy, antisocial misanthrope with a burning hatred for faux-friendly sales assistants. He does not want to hear about your extended warranty offer.

Brick and mortar game stores; what used to be the cornerstone of the industry is increasingly regarded as a quaint relic of that primitive era before we had newfangled whachamacallits like broadband interwebs, e-commerce, and digital content delivery services.

Lemme drop some facts on yo ass. According to a recent report detailing the spending habits of Commonwealth Bank cardholders, online spending has increased a whopping 126 per cent in the last twelve months. Naturally this wasn't all on videogames – for the most part people are flocking to online department stores – but videogames have been identified as the one of the key areas of growth in the online retail space. Conversely, sales of boxed games from traditional vendors like EB and GAME have declined precipitously, plummeting 16 per cent during the 2009/10 financial year.

Then there's digital distribution. With the rise of robust digital content delivery services like PSN, Origin, and Steam, consumers are becoming increasingly accustomed to downloading their games directly. This is good news for everybody. From the perspective of publishers and distributors, it eliminates overheads associated with the packaging and delivery of physical products – savings that can be passed on to the consumer.

Plus, I mean, who wants to go to a brick and mortar game store anymore? They're garish, loud, packed with smelly children, and (typically, I'm assuming) staffed by slack-jawed half-wits who haven't the slightest clue about the products they sell. If it's a choice between that and buying games from the comfort of my couch (in my undies, eating Fruit Loops straight from the box) then... well, it's not really a choice at all, is it?

Oh, the Internet. Creator and destroyer of opportunity, the enabler with a digital scythe that magically extends into the real world. While it gives people more choice for where they buy their wares in and out of Australia, and putting a squeeze on those stubborn retail prices, shops are here to stay.

The key reason is that shops are just too big to fail. It might sound like something Goldman Sachs trots out in a press release, but big retailers are too engrained in the system to run last in the race to your wallet.

The big boys have plenty of deals with all of the game's publishers to snare the biggest and best deals to entice you, the customer, because they have a history of performing well and turning a profit. If they don't thrive, they die – there's been plenty of competition. They have stores already set up that you can *actually* see rather than putting blind faith in the Net, and with people you can talk to.

They can wow you with bold displays and they (sometimes) have some of the gear you're going to get in the Limited Super Collector's Edition in the shop for you to touch. There's something about seeing what you're getting before it's in your mitts.

Plus, the savvy retailer allows you to return a game within a week or so and either get something else on the spot or cash back in your hand. The Internet may take your money instantly but it doesn't deliver your goods in the same fashion, and going through the gut-ache of lining up in the Post Office to return a title just doesn't hold the same appeal. And, the Post Office is barely open on the weekends, and is never near the food court. Or Fruit Loops.



Paul Taylor

NO

Paul likes leaving the house and actually browsing through the boxes on the shelves rather than on a monitor. You can keep your extended warranty, though.

Want to hear more of the OPS team disagreeing with each other? Check out our Podcast available on side B of our cover disc. Want to get into a great debate with one of us, or a fellow reader? Hop onto www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia and make your case. The best topics may find their way into the magazine.

► IN REALITY

Cryogenic suspension: putting death on ice?

As seen in: *Rage*, *Batman: Arkham Asylum*

From Batman's Mr Freeze, to psychedelic super spy Austin Powers, and even childhood favourite Mr. Walt Disney himself, the idea of being cryogenically frozen seems like a cool thing to do.

It's most current implementation can be found within id Software's new shooter *Rage*, which follows the plights of a survivor of the 2029 Apophis meteorite impact. Your character awakes from the Ark; a world-wide movement in which the top tiers of humanity freeze themselves underground inside of cyro-pods, in order to later rebuild the earth and save what is left of the human race.

But while many class this entire notion as merely the fodder of sci-fi fantasy, elements of this high-tech concept ring truer in today's society than one may think. And it's all thanks to the power of cryonics.

Cryonics refers to the practice of maintaining patients currently classed as legally 'dead' and whom can no longer be supported by standard medicine at extremely low temperatures. Whilst it's not as elaborate as preconceptions of making people into life-size Calippos, it's all in the ultimate goal to carry a person into the future where the preservation process can be reversed, and where modern medicine is able to restore the patient to full health.

If you were to take a trip down to Scottsdale, Arizona in the United States, you'd stumble across The Alcor Life Extension Foundation. Founded in 1972, the non-profit organisation is the world leader in the field of cryonics. Alcor intervenes in

► FrOZone

Feel like utilising cryonics in Oz? Well, believe it or not, Australia has its own cryonics 'epicenter' - The Cryonics Association of Australasia.

The CAA is a non-profit organisation, registered in Victoria offering support for residents of Australia, New Zealand and other countries within the region planning to make arrangements with US Cryonics organisations. Furthermore, the group aims to further promote the concept within Australia and act as a self-regulatory authority for any cryonics facility, should they be developed down under.



Note: shoving the corpse of a beloved pet or relative into the freezer does not count as cryonic suspension.

the dying process as soon as possible after legal 'death,' in order to preserve the subject's brain as best they can. The reason they put someone on ice as soon as they're able is to prevent degradation of the neural tissue that encodes both memory and personality identity, which is widely considered to be the true boundary between life and death.

As of 2010, approximately 200 people have undergone such a procedure since the idea was originally proposed in 1962. That said however, cryonics faces one major hurdle - no adult human has ever been revived from temperatures that plunge far below freezing. All work and research conducted under the cryonics umbrella is done so under the pretence and expectation that future technology will be made available

to reverse the damage associated with the entire process. Whether this actually comes to pass or not remains to be seen.

All things considered, though the reality of humans entering cryogenic pods to be awoken in a not too distant future is fairly far removed from reality at the moment, it is a concept that is slowly gaining traction and bound to make even greater progress as time goes on. Optimistic futurists believe it will be sooner rather than later, while detractors claim it will take centuries before any true developments will be made. Regardless, maybe a few people frozen today will have the good fortune to awaken to the era of PlayStation 5, Vita 2, and - of course - flying cars. We can dream, can't we?

► NUMBER CRUNCHING

18

number in millions of maps packs sold for *Call of Duty: Black Ops*

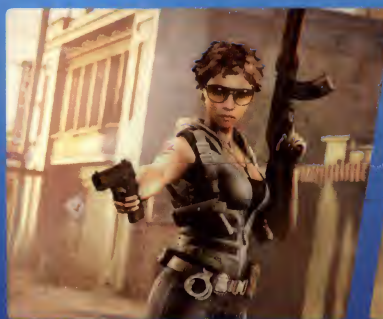


3

number in millions of new PSN users since the April outage

Separated at Birth!

NO. 31 Kimberly Evans and the completely unfishy Halle Berry



Kimberly who? Yeah, we know, which goes to show that a celebrity likeness isn't going to save a lame turkey from being absolutely roasted. Kimberly Evans is one of the three protagonists in *Call of Juarez: The Cartel*. A smart talking FBI agent born on the streets, she... oh, what's the point? The game was rubbish. Halle Berry, though, generally manages to play kick arse roles. Let's leave it at that and bank on there not being a movie version of this once alright series. (Unless, of course, it stars Danny Trejo.)

► INFOCUS

CURSED CRUSADE

Thanks in large part to the success of games like *Dragon Age* and the *Game of Thrones* television series, dark and gritty takes on traditional medieval fantasy settings have become the in thing. If it's got an angry armoured dude with a blood-stained sword in it, you can bet your bodice that people will take notice.

Since *Cursed Crusade* has at least 100 angry armoured dudes with blood-stained swords, we can only assume it's going to sell, like, a million copies.

Set during the Crusades, the game tells the story of a young Templar knight who awakens an ancient curse, granting him incredible – but terrible – powers. Apparently there'll be over 130 different weapons with which to stab, slash, chop, gouge, poke and pummel foes, as well as 16 different fighting styles to master, so those of you who like a bit of variety in your bloodletting are sure to be well pleased.

Have at thee, villains!



SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... VIGILANTE

OPTION 1

There are two types of vigilante: active and reactive. Let's start with the latter.

Reactive vigilantes are one-hit wonders. Some bad shit's happened to them – like maybe their family got kidnapped by punks, or a demon ate their dog – and so they get all mad and go on a mission to exact revenge on those responsible. Think Liam Neeson in *Taken* or Mike Haggar in *Final Fight*.

Of course, it's not every day that a Colombian drug cartel comes to your home and shoots your wife, so you might need to be a bit proactive. Obviously we're not saying you should hire someone to do something horrible so that you can get revenge on them later on – that would defeat the point of being a vigilante in the first place. But maybe you could live your life in a such a way as to... invite hostile attention. For example, you could ring up a local crime boss (they're in the yellow pages), say some rude things about his mother, then leave your name and home address. You might not get results straight away, but keep at it! Eventually *someone* will get mad enough to burn down your house, and then – if you survive – you can go get revenge on them. Easy!

Active vigilantes, on the other hand, don't need tragedy as a motivator (though it helps), and they don't stop at just one gang of banditos or one Yakuza boss. Active vigilantes go out and look for trouble, and when they find it, they kick it in the teeth. Similarly to their reactive cousins, active vigilantes should be skilled in all the martial arts, be proficient with a wide variety of firearms, and – if possible – have genius level intellect and/or super-powers. Batman is of course the archetypal active vigilante, but all super-heroes fit the mold to a degree. Even crap ones like Aquaman.

Now, having said all this, we hasten to note that being a vigilante is against the law by definition, and therefore not something we can endorse in any official capacity. We're just being hypothetical, which means you're not allowed to sue us. So nyah.

TIME:

Depends! Reactive vigilantes will generally only keep at it for as long as it takes to exact vengeance – a couple years tops. But active vigilantes? They're in it for life.

OPTION 2

Turn on *Batman: Arkham City*

TIME:

Five minutes

► INTERVIEW

The long and winding road

Need for Speed: The Run is an action driving game, taking you on a massive journey from San Francisco on the west coast of the US to New York City in the east. **Alex Grimbey**, producer at Black Box, tells us about the team's latest project and why cutscenes are now the worst time to get yourself a drink.



OPS: Your last titles in the franchise were *Pro Street* and *Undercover*. How is *The Run* an evolution of those two games?

Alex Grimbey: When those story scenes came up you weren't really playing as a character as such, you were just playing as yourself. This time around you're playing as Jack, and you take him on this journey. The biggest change is that in any previous *Need For Speed* game you'd do a race, you'd win or lose and you'd watch the story – it was a bit of a disconnect. So for the first time we're going to try to keep you engaged in that action movie experience and make you play through the story sections... we don't want the player to put the controller down and have a tea break while they're watching the story! Without the Frostbite engine there's always been some kind of technical limitation that stopped us from delivering that.

OPS: We've seen a few games lately that have text saying 'press a button to skip' right in the middle of a cutscene, and it makes us wonder 'what's the point?' It seems quite hard for some developers to make gamers and even themselves commit to a game's cutscene.

AG: There's no 'skip the cutscene' in *The Run*; that's something that we've actively avoided. I'm from a hardcore racing background [having worked at Codemasters on *DIRT*, *GRID* and *TOCA*] and I like to get in and out of races as quickly as possible, and the way we're delivering these cutscenes keeps my style of player engaged in that. They really bridge a gap between the races and give an explanation as to why Jack is having to get across the country as quickly as possible.

OPS: Can you tell us more about Jack?

AG: I can't really reveal too much of his motivation because

“We're going to keep you engaged in that action movie experience... **we don't want you to put the controller down and have a tea-break while watching the story!**”

one of the core things we do throughout the game is unveil his motivation – we definitely don't set everything up from the start. However, he's the type of guy we want people to think 'he's the super me.'

OPS: Will we see any imported Aussie cars in *The Run*?

AG: Well, Jack is a car aficionado, so he's not just going to drive cars from the States, they'll come from all over the world. Without giving too much away we didn't want to just have the BMW M3, it was the M3 GTS, and it wasn't just the Ford Mustang, it was the Boss 302. We've taken that approach with cars that are from Europe and other territories as well.

OPS: You mentioned using the Frostbite engine. Was that always your plan to use it in *The Run*?

AG: This is the first time in a long time that Black Box has had more than a year to make a game. When we thought of the extra time we had we wanted to ensure we delivered the best title possible. Frostbite was an obvious choice in terms of what it gave us for the story telling ability, the characters, the world destruction and the effects, even though it didn't have a driving physics engine built in. 🐾



► INFOCUS

SONIC GENERATIONS

Ah, Sonic. He's turning 20 this year, and while you can't see the cake and candles he's still running fast enough to generate enough of a blast to blow them all out. And there's not one oddly rendered human in sight (well, save for Robotnik/Eggman).

He's definitely on form here, mostly reverting

back to what he does best (running really, really fast from left to right) and while there's a promise of new *Sonic* it's even more of a cause for celebration. Yeah, you're thrashing around in 3D but this half of the game sometimes dips back into 2D for a spell, and everything we've seen looks *lush*.

Bright, vibrant environments, high-contrast

palettes and tonnes of incidental details. Though the frame rate coughs a little bit we're still talking earlyish code with plenty of time left to iron the kinks out. Can you tell we're optimistic?

Oh, and Tails? Don't worry about him: he plays a support role. This is Sonic's party through and through. Grab a lolly bag on the way in.

▶ TOP TEN

Memorable Douchebags

Douchebag: an individual who has an over-inflated sense of self worth, compounded by a low level of intelligence, behaving ridiculously in front of colleagues with no sense of how moronic he or she appears. Or, in the gaming sense, a character that you wish you could jump into the screen and punch in the face.



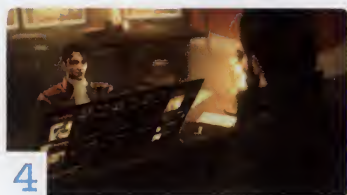
1 Kabbage Boy *Brütal Legend*

Admittedly, these poser idiots are only in the intro cinematic and don't annoy you for too long (because they die a brutal and thoroughly satisfying death). That aside, they represent everything that is wrong with moneygrubbing modern music. We'd kill 'em again if we could – preferably by beating them to death with a magic guitar that's on fire and also shoots lightning.



2 OG Loc *GTA: San Andreas*

This waste of *San Andrean* space got himself locked up in prison to boost his rap career (by violating traffic laws and other minor offences). Upon his release he then proceeds to act hardcore in his Str8 From Tha Streetz album. An accurate and often hilarious pisstake on wannabe rappers, but a douchebag nonetheless.



4 Francis Pritchard *DX:HR*

From the word go this snooty scientist with a superiority complex is out to give you a hard time. What's worse, as head of cyber-security at Sarif Industries it's his job to give you snide advice through your Infolink on how to progress in the field. You'll want to punch him through two walls after a little while.



3 Brucie Kibbutz *GTA IV*

If ever there was an anti-advertising campaign for steroids, it'd centre around this guy. For some gamers Brucie "stay alpha, bro" Kibbutz was hilarious comic relief, for others he was an overexcited idiot that needed to be shot in the groin whenever the game allowed - insta-fail condition be damned.



5 Captain Qwark *Ratchet & Clank series*

Look this guy up in the dictionary and you'll get the following description: "a selfish, deluded coward willing to do daring acts in order to gain publicity who will temporarily side with the villains and betray his allies in order to save himself". This guy wrote the freaking textbook on douchebaggery.



6 Buzz Buzz! series

Unlike most of the people on this list, Buzz isn't a malicious douchebag. He's an unfunny, utterly unentertaining one. Ordinarily such personality traits don't matter, but as a gameshow presenter whose job is to constantly talk, it's a problem. Especially since he's voiced by Jason Donovan.



7 Fernando Martinez *GTA:VC*

Most of the Idiots on this list only make you want to climb into the TV to punch them in the face. This guy made us want to climb into the TV, and then make another climb into the game's radio station, to beat him up. This miracle-working marriage councillor (from "Lata") was a knob, pure and simple.



8 DJ Stryker *Burnout 3*

Try to start a new game of *Burnout 3* and you'll be detained for five minutes by this obnoxious turd. "Hey, what's up guys, you're listening to Stryker on Crash FM. I'm taking just a few minutes of your time to cover the rules of the *Burnout* world." Because hey, driving and crashing is neuroscience, right?



9 Khalisah al-Jalani *Mass Effect series*

This roving reporter for Westerlund News was out to get you and make you look like a fool to billions of people, regardless of how many galaxies you'd saved. Fortunately, anybody with a renegade streak could interrupt her disingenuous assertions, but good. POW! Right in the kisser.



10 Dan Hibiki *Street Fighter series*

There is no greater humiliation in *Street Fighter* than that of a defeat at the sissy hands of Dan. Originally designed as a parody of Ryo from SNK's *Art of Fighting* games (who was himself an obvious rip-off of *Street Fighter*'s Ryu), Dan is a hideously underpowered and pathetic martial artist. He talks a massive game and thinks he's the man, but would struggle to fight his way out of a wet paper bag. This is the very essence of douchebaggery.

THE HONEST GAME NAME COLLECTION



IN STORE NOW



Around the World in PS3

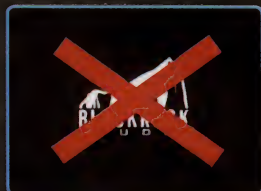
OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



▲ THEY DIDN'T ASK FOR THIS

🇯🇵 TOKYO, JAPAN

Originally due in the second week of September, Square Enix delayed the Japanese launch of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* for a month to excise content deemed unacceptable by national rating board CERO. Squenix declined to specify the exact nature of the offending content, other than to say that it's 'visual' in nature and only appears once. Perhaps it was the secret dildo room in Heng-Sha (pictured) that got censors in a tizzy? Possibly, but given the oddities of the Japanese classification system, it could be almost anything. Our money's on some unintentionally offensive kanji.



▲ BYE-BYE BLACK ROCK
🇬🇧 BRIGHTON, UK

It's official: Black Rock Studio, developer of critically acclaimed but commercially disappointing racers *Pure* and *Split/Second*, has closed its doors for good. On September 2 former studio director Nick Baynes wrote on his Twitter account: "[Black Rock] officially closes its doors today. Thoughts go out to all facing their last day." According to parent company Disney, the decision to close the Brighton-based developer was made following the cancellation of an unannounced secret project, rumoured to be a free-to-play tower defence game called *Champions Alliance*. RIP, rocksters.



▲ RU 4 REAL
🇺🇸 LOS ANGELES, USA

In what is easily one of the strangest brand-extension/promotional initiatives we've seen in a long time, geek-focussed cable TV channel G4 has begun production on a reality TV show based on *Uncharted 3*. Called *Uncharted 3: Race to the Ring* ("snigger") the show will see a bunch of out-of-shape shut-ins humiliate themselves completing real-world challenges loosely based on scenarios from the game, all in the hope of winning a swanky Sony home-theatre setup and (presumably) a stack of *Uncharted* merch. The show airs Oct 31, so if you have Foxtel or whatever, check it out. Should be good for a laugh, at least.



▲ ANNOYED AVIANS
🇨🇳 CHANGSHA, CHINA

Window of the World, a theme park in the Chinese city of Changsha, is cashing in on the *Angry Birds* craze with a variety of (unauthorised) attractions based on Rovio's insanely successful puzzlers. As well as some bog standard cardboard cut-outs and life-sized mascots modelled after *Angry Birds* characters, the park also features a real-life version of the game in which players use a giant slingshot to shoot plush birdy dolls at balloon pigs nestled between stacks of toy blocks. Needless to say, this sounds totally freaking rad and we want to go to China right now and have a go.

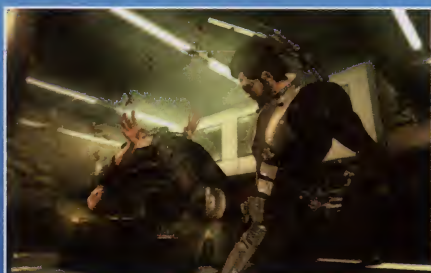


▲ BEARDY BUILDING
🇸🇬 SINGAPORE

See the picture above? That's an artist's rendering of the new LucasFilm regional headquarters in Singapore. Designed to look like a giant Sandcrawler, the currently-in-construction edifice will house LucasFilm's offices as well as a 100-seat cinema, a public podium, and verdant garden spaces designed to promote a sense of natural serenity. Although due for completion in 2012, Lucas will no doubt revisit the building every few years and demand a series of increasingly ridiculous changes until eventually it looks nothing like the original and everyone wishes he'd just leave it the hell alone.

INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

🇪🇺 EUROPE



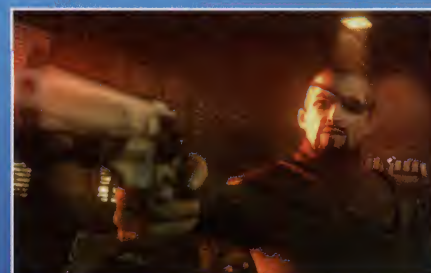
- 1 **Deus Ex: Human Revolution** Eidos
- 2 **Rugby World Cup 2011** 505 Games
- 3 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 4 **Gran Turismo 5** SCE
- 5 **DIRT 3** Codemasters

🇯🇵 JAPAN



- 1 **Monster Hunter 3rd HD Version** Capcom
- 2 **Sengoku Musou 3** Tecmo-Koei
- 3 **Uncharted 2** SCE
- 4 **Chou Jigen Game Neptune Mk.3** Compile Heart
- 5 **Jikyuu Powerful Pro Yakyuu 2011** Konami

🇺🇸 USA



- 1 **Deus Ex: Human Revolution** Eidos
- 2 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 3 **NCAA Football 2012** EA
- 4 **Mortal Kombat** Warner Bros.
- 5 **Medal of Honor** EA

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

Oct 1

AFL Grand Final

Footy fans, the AFL Grand Final takes place at the MCG. If you can't make it there then tune into Channel 10 and either cheer loudly or curse at the losers.



Oct 2



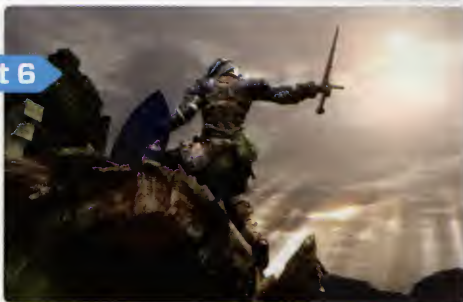
NRL Grand Final

Other footy fans, the NRL Grand Final kicks off at 5pm at ANZ Stadium in Sydney Olympic Park. Bash your remote until it finds Channel 9. Cheer/cry as per yesterday.

Oct 6

Dark Souls

This came in *just* too late to be reviewed this issue, this RPG hits stores today. Apparently even harder and more unforgiving than its predecessor. Sounds *joyous*.



Oct 6

Rage

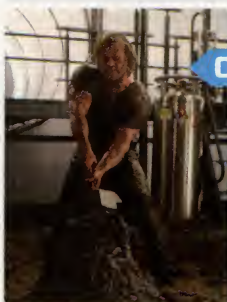
id, the inventors of the shooter, release *Rage* into the gaming wild. Sure it has guns but it's also heavy on vehicular carnage. Plus, it looks stunningly ugly - and that's a good thing.



Oct 6

Thor

Just to make this day even more epic is the Blu-ray and DVD release of *Thor*. This action-adventure romp stars Aussie Chris Hemsworth as the son of Odin.



Oct 9

Bathurst 1000

Ladies and gents, grab your motorised eskies, Holden/Ford merch a and move to the mountain as the Bathurst 1000 revs up and takes over Bathurst.

Oct 13

The Thing

The silver screen lights up as Joel Edgerton stars in the prequel to John Carpenter's *The Thing* in his movie also (confusingly) called *The Thing*. Looks good.



Oct 27

Battlefield 3

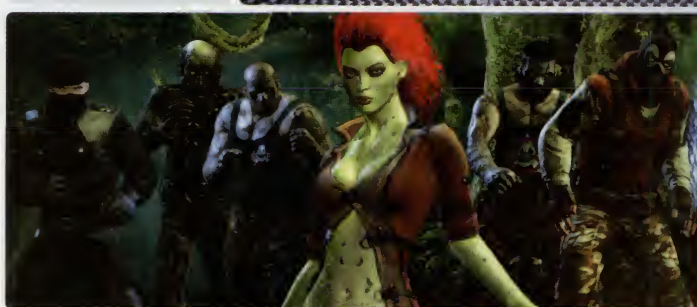
EA's shooter unloads the first salvo for shooter of the year as it rolls into stores today.



Oct 19

X-Men: First Class

This Marvel film takes you to school while you take it home, as it's out on Blu-ray and DVD.



Can't miss... Batman: Arkham City OCTOBER 19

Well goddamn, it's Batman. *Batman: Arkham City* lands in stores but we're expecting it'll lurk in your console instead of in the shops. Check out page 62 for our comprehensive review.

Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

OUT NOW

Dead Island
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** QVS

Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ

Child of Eden
Genre: Oddball **Distributor:** Ubisoft

F1 2011
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners

Bleach: Soul Resurrection
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners

FIFA 12
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** EA

Atelier Totori
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners

NHL 12
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** EA

Madden NFL 12
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** EA

God of War Collection: Vol. 2
Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:** Sony

Supremacy MMA
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** AIE

Ico and Shadow of the Colossus HD
Genre: Platformer **Distributor:** Sony

OCTOBER 2011

X-Men: Destiny
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Activision **Date:** October 5

Dark Souls
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** October 6

Twisted Metal
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** October 6

NBA 2K12
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** October 7

Rage
Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:** AIE **Date:** October 7

Just Dance 3
Genre: Dance **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** October 11

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon
Genre: Flight **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** October 13

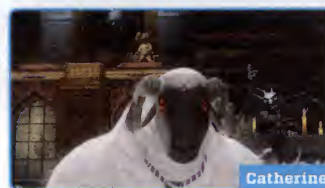
PES 2012
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** October 14

Batman: Arkham City
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Warner Bros. **Date:** October 19

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One
Genre: Platformer **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** October 20

Battlefield 3
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** EA **Date:** October 27

Disgaea 4
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** October 27



Catherine
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** QVS **Date:** TBC October

NOVEMBER 2011

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Warner Bros. **Date:** November 2

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Genre: Action-adventure **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** November 3

Silent Hill: Downpour
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** November 4

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Activision **Date:** November 8

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** AIE **Date:** November 11



Saints Row: The Third
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** November 15

Assassin's Creed Revelations
Genre: Action-adventure **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** November 15

Need For Speed The Run
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** EA **Date:** November 17

Rayman Origins
Genre: Platformer **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** November 18

Sonic Generations
Genre: Platformer **Distributor:** SEGA **Date:** November 22

WWE '12
Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** November 25

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** TBC November

DECEMBER 2011

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** December 8

Ridge Racer Unbounded
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC December

2011/2012

DmC
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** TBC 2011

SSX
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** EA **Date:** TBC 2012



Final Fantasy XIII-2
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** January 2012

Anarchy Reigns
Genre: Action **Distributor:** Sega **Date:** January 2012

The Darkness 2
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K Games **Date:** February 2 2012

Mass Effect 3
Genre: Action RPG **Distributor:** EA **Date:** March 2012

Asura's Wrath
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** March 2012

Dragon's Dogma
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** March 2012

► Limited Edition

Dark Souls

Set in a rich, dark fantasy universe, the game's tense dungeon crawling, fearsome enemy encounters and groundbreaking online features combine for an utterly compelling experience. *Dark Souls* breaks down barriers with a seamless world that encourages exploration and demands adaptability. As players encounter terrifying enemies and discover new areas, the game's foundation of challenge and reward permeates the experience, delivering an unparalleled sense of achievement.

The Limited Edition includes: game guide, special hardbound art book, original soundtrack, behind-the-scenes video.

EB GAMES \$98
Estimated dispatch date: 6/10/2011

JB HIFI \$94
Estimated dispatch date: 20/10/2011

GAME \$84
Estimated dispatch date: 6/10/2011



Prototype 2

Genre: Action-adventure

Distributor: Activision

Date: April 2012

Tomb Raider

Genre: Action-adventure

Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

Agent

Genre: Action Distributor:

Rockstar Date: TBC 2012

Spec Ops: The Line

Genre: Action Distributor: 2K

Date: TBC 2012

Metal Gear Solid: Rising

Genre: Action Distributor:

Mindscape Date: TBC 2012

The Last Guardian

Genre: Adventure Distributor:

Sony Date: TBC 2012

Max Payne 3

Genre: Action Distributor:

Rockstar Date: TBC 2012

Hitman Absolution

Genre: Action Distributor:

Namco Bandai Partners

Date: TBC 2012

Prey 2

Genre: Shooter Distributor:

TBA Date: TBC 2012

Dust 514

Genre: Shooter Distributor:

TBA Date: TBC 2012

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon:

Future Soldier

Genre: Action Distributor:

Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

BioShock Infinite

Genre: Shooter Distributor:

2K Date: TBC 2012

Darksiders 2

Genre: Action-Adventure

Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012

Collector's Edition

Sonic Generations

Set across three defining eras from 20 years of *Sonic the Hedgehog* video game history, the instantly recognisable environments of *Sonic Generations* have been re-built in stunning HD and are now playable in both classic side scrolling 2D from 1991, as well as modern 3D style found in Sonic's most recent adventures. Sonic's universe is thrown into chaos when a mysterious new power creates 'time holes' which pull him and his friends back through time. As a result he encounters some surprises from his past history including Classic Sonic, Sonic as he appeared in 1991. Modern Sonic and Classic Sonic must defeat this strange new enemy, save their friends, and find out who really is behind this diabolical deed.

The Collector's Edition includes: Collectable figurine featuring both Classic Sonic and Modern Sonic; exclusive, individually numbered commemorative 'Gold Ring'; '20 Years of Sonic Art' book, containing never before seen sketches and images from the past 20 years; '20th Anniversary Sonic Soundtrack' featuring a selection of tracks handpicked by Sonic Team; 'History of Sonic: Birth of an Icon' documentary, an exclusive collection of interviews and footage charting Sonics' life from inception through to becoming one of the most iconic characters in videogame history; Limited Edition lenticular packaging and bonus additional downloadable content.



EB GAMES \$98
Estimated dispatch
date: 13/10/2011

JB HIFI \$94.98
Estimated dispatch
date: 13/10/2011

GAME \$99.95
Estimated dispatch
date: 13/10/2011

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Genre: Platformer Distributor:

Sony Date: TBC 2012

Metro: Last Light

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ

Date: TBC 2012

Top Gun

Genre: Flight Distributor:

Tuff Kat Entertainment

Date: TBC 2012

In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



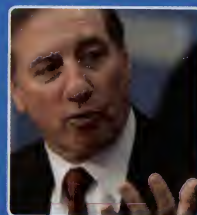
"It obviously violates professional and ethical standards at Techland and should never have happened. I can only express my sincerest

apologies for this incident and assure you that whoever acted so irresponsibly did not represent the views and opinions of Techland."

Techland's **Blazej Krakowiak**, suitably contrite after a skill called "feminist whore" was discovered in the PC version of *Dead Island*.

"[Consoles without disc drives] will result in a lower cost for the hardware manufacturer, which will result in a lower cost to consumers and therefore a lower entry point, thus driving more mass market adoption. [There'd be] no inventory, no markdowns, and all the money spent by the consumer would go to the developer or publisher."

THQ CEO **Brian Farrell** on the discless future of console gaming.



"It creates a social contract. How can we start behaving as

if we live in a neighbourhood? You try to treat your neighbours with respect. When you create a true community, that, to me, is the difference between 'social gaming' and a community."

Activision digital VP **Jamie Berger** on the social benefits of *Call of Duty Elite*.

"There's this stranglehold that the AAA retail model has which I think is just crushing innovation and access to creative content. If you're paying that much for a game, you don't want to take chances. You want it to be a known experience, guaranteed fun. That's not healthy."

Ninja Theory studio co-founder **Tameem Antoniades** laments the game industry's obsession with blockbusters.



Special Edition

RAGE

This groundbreaking shooter is set in the not-too-distant future after an asteroid impacts Earth, leaving a ravaged world behind. You emerge into this vast wasteland to discover humanity working to rebuild itself against such forces as bandit gangs, mutants, and the Authority – an oppressive government regime that has a special interest in you in particular. Featuring intense first-person shooter action, breakneck vehicle combat, an expansive world to explore and jaw-dropping graphics powered by id's revolutionary id Tech 5 technology, *Rage* promises an experience like no other.

The Special Edition includes: The DLC found in the Anarchy Edition (Double Barrel Shotgun, Rat Rod Buggy, Fists of Rage, Crimson Elite Armour) plus additional items exclusive to EB Games: Individually numbered Rage Print; Rage wing stick, Gang Badges



EB GAMES \$108
Estimated dispatch date: 6/10/2011

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

We all need to take a step back and stop complaining about game length because, honestly, we're the ones to blame.

We can all be a little self-centred at times but gamers can be an emotional lot. Spend more than, say, 30 seconds on, well, any videogame website. Try the Metacritic user reviews; it's a thick soup of schoolyard thuggery, pointless cock wagging, typo-filled hyperbole and CAPITAL LETTERS.

Gamers furious about shrinking game length are among the loudest on the internet. It's a common complaint. Games these days are too short, they argue, and they need to be longer.

The facts about game length, however, tell a different story. The facts I'm referring to are how many players actually finish their games.

I remember being told by a developer once that they operate under the assumption that around 80 to 90 per cent of players who start their game will never see the end of it. That's insane. Imagine working in a restaurant and only seeing one or two plates in 10 come back empty because the vast majority of your patrons send their meals back after a bit of nibble.

According to Raptr, a service that tracks more than 23 million gaming sessions, only 10 per cent of people who began *Red Dead Redemption* completed the final mission. Think about that. Out of every 10 people who started the game only one of them finished it.

That's pathetic, to be honest. Maybe you finish every game you start and maybe you genuinely would love games to be longer overall. But maybe you don't. Maybe there have been dozens of games you've never bothered to finish and yet you still join the call for longer games.

Do people really want longer games? Or do they just wish the ones they personally liked most weren't over as quickly?


Looking at these sorts of figures is it any wonder developers are embracing shorter games? Say it takes X years for a team of Y people to create 10 hours of story, and it costs Z. You could double X or you could

double Y and blow the story out to 20 hours but, naturally, you're also going to blow the budget. Either one is going to double Z. How many publishers are realistically going to double their development costs to extend a game to a length that'll see only 10 to 20 per cent of players even finish it?

Why make a 30-plus hour game when most players aren't bothering to complete them? The answer is, most publishers don't – hence the rise of six-to-12-hour games.

Completion rates, however, are actually on the rise thanks to shorter campaigns. Many games now have a 40 to 50 per cent completion rate thanks to 10-or-so-hour campaigns instead of the 20-30 hour ones of yore.

Why aren't we finishing our games in the first place? A few reasons, actually. The average age of gamers is a lot higher than it used to be. Between work and family the average gamer just has less time to play games in general. There's also the quantity of games being released; it's all too easy to become distracted by the next big thing and put aside the game you're currently playing – we're all guilty of it.

If we really do want longer games we need to prove it and finish the ones we already have, but I don't think it's going to happen. 



OPINION Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist who finished *Red Dead Redemption* but never made to the end of *BioShock*.

“Why make a 30-plus hour game when most players aren't bothering to complete them? **The answer is, most publishers don't**”





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PS3
PlayStation 3

Competition Write in, score prizes!

WIN!

A LIMITED EDITION *DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO* PACK INCLUDING TANNER'S LEATHER JACKET! DETAILS BELOW



Hell for leather

Win a limited edition *Driver: San Francisco* pack including Tanner's leather jacket!

Want to be the real wheelman? Thanks to Ubisoft Australia you can, as we have a Collector's Edition of *Driver: San Francisco* and the leather jacket worn by Tanner, the main man in *Driver*, to give away to one winner! 10 runners up will also win a copy of this awesome game.

To be in the running to win this spectacular prize, answer this question in 25 words or less and follow our entry instructions:

What's the first thing you'd do or say if you were an undercover cop for a day?



How to Enter

To enter Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia competitions email your entries to ops@citrusmedia.com.au with 'Hell for Leather' in the subject line. Only one email entry is allowed – multiple entries will be deleted. Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **Hell for Leather, OPS Competitions, PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002**. Only one entry per household will be allowed. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. **Competitions close 13/12/2011**. Winners will be notified by mail.



LOVE SPORT PLAY FIFA

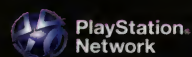


FIFA 12

SIT SIDE BY SIDE WITH GREATNESS. TAKE TO THE PITCH WITH GIANTS. THIS SEASON THE TACKLES ARE HARDER, THE FOOTWORK IS SHARPER AND EVERY GOAL BOOSTS YOUR CLUB'S RANKING. IT'S TIME TO GET OFF THE TERRACES AND INTO THE TEAM. IT'S TIME TO PLAY THE GAME YOU LOVE.

ea.com/au/football
OUT 29.09.2011

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inbox



▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

RESALE DENIED

I work in a game store that does quite a good turnover in pre-owned games and consoles, and it constantly amazes me how much trouble a game developer will go through to prevent their games being sold second-hand. From one-time-use-only codes, to flashier and more outlandish pre-order gimmicks, these guys will stop at nothing to make average-gamer drop their hard earned, on a brand new copy.

Then EA steps in with their online pass, to make you pay an extra amount if you want to play a pre-owned game online. I understand that game devs work hard to make fantastic games that I wouldn't have a chance of imagining, but to take an extra piece of the pie every time their games are sold second-hand is probably going a bit far. You don't see the head of Mitsubishi standing down at the used car lot taking a percentage each time a salesman sells a pre-owned Magna.

The pre-owned market is there for those who can't afford top ticket prices, but still want to have a go, and I have to admit there were a few royal stinkers that I may have bought at full price were it not for the pre-owned copy smiling up at me.

I think game companies need to realise

that a sequel sells, because a good percentage of the public picked up the original on sale second-hand, which probably wasn't available brand new anymore anyway! Pre-owned games means that you don't have all the stuff you finished, or really didn't like, cluttering up the space where your fave games should be. It means less garbage in landfills, and availability of games far after they've been discontinued.

Lastly, I would just like to say that I, and I would say most people, would be willing to pay brand new prices for decent games like *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, *Uncharted* and *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, but more often than not we hand over our cash and get burned with something more like *Thor*, or *Beijing Olympics*. If you put a crap game out there, of course it's going to end up in the 2-for-1 bin. Bring out something brilliant though, and it'll stay in our collections forever.

Larni Falzon, via email

You've raised some good points there. Online passes stick in our throats a bit too, and your letter leads to bigger questions like, 'will there be disc-based games in the future?' For now, have a game that we reckon is worth buying.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Congratulations Larni. Hope you like dishing out justice!



The future is wow!

MORE REAL THAN REAL

Hi OPS,

Hi guys, first off great mag, enjoy reading it to and from work. On the TV on the weekend there was a bunch of the usual old-school movies on through the day, and it got me thinking about just how far technology has come over the past 40-or-so years of gaming. Our average life expectancy is about 80, right? So thinking that in about half a lifetime games have gone from being two paddles that move up and down, to almost realistic movement and facial recognition tech like in *L.A. Noire*, I can barely imagine how much more advanced games and tech will be in another 40 years. If it keeps going the way it is gaming may very well end up becoming its own dimension, in a sense (think of the internet in *Futurama*), where you can physically walk round inside the artificial world. I'm starting to believe TV and games will look better than real life itself.

Joel Phillips, via email

Technology and, especially, gaming technology is a rather amazing thing. What constituted acceptable gaming practices 10 years ago is now slammed by our evolved gaming eyes.

One of the great things about the fixed hardware of a console is that it curbs massive technological leaps, somewhat, to offer a more gradual incline to super-realistic gaming bliss.

That's not to say that gaming technology is stagnant. Far from it. But we're appreciative that a new game-changing technology isn't being released in every other title. Phew.

Something else worth considering is the inherent problems of gaming graphics that improve in quality. The type of violence that was once acceptable in the likes of the *Mortal Kombat* series, is now considered too realistic and, thus, a bannable visual offence.

NOVEMBER PAIN

I read your mag every month and I follow your reviews quite religiously. Now, as I currently only have a part-time job with limited cash coming in, I need to think pretty hard on what game to buy next. That's where your reviews, ratings and previews come in handy. As I'm sure you're aware, November is going to be a huge month. So many high-quality games are going to be released and I need to know the team at OPS isn't just going to give every game a lazy 10 out of 10. *Uncharted 1* and *2* got full marks and so did *Modern Warfare 1* and *2*. *Oblivion* was a home run and the entire *Assassin's Creed* range got full marks (except *AC II* which was a 9/10). Going off this list, I reckon it would be quite easy to stick a magical '10' on the end of a review without a second thought.

I'm not saying the previous titles didn't deserve those 10s, I'm just asking for some consideration for us poor buggers, when it comes time to review these games. I am at a major loss as to which one of the upcoming new-series entries for these four should be bought in November and which will have to wait 'til Christmas. So please, try be critical and try to find the leader of the pack

Daniel Hanson, via email

Hey Dan, thanks for allocating some of your budget towards purchasing OPS.

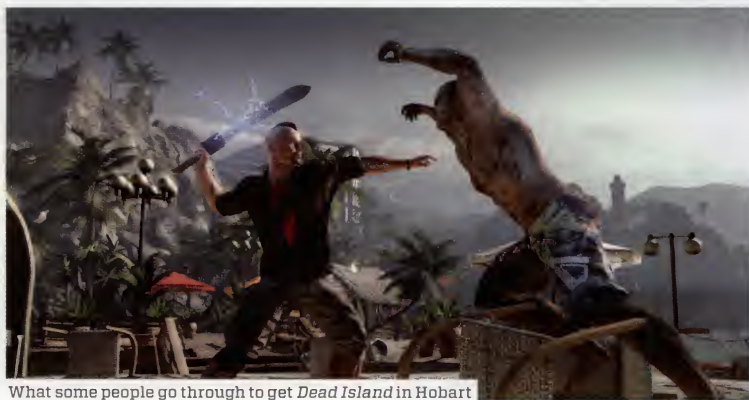
Speak to us!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Citrus Media
PO Box 20154
World Square,
NSW 2002

...email...
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What some people go through to get *Dead Island* in Hobart

"...gaming may well end up becoming its own dimension"

You've touched on some interesting issues here and some of the troubles that we mere mortal games reviewers face when a slew of top games are due to hit.

Every game has to be judged on its own merit and is usually judged by one of our team who is most familiar with that genre of gaming and/or the series. The trouble hits when there are too many good games that all deserve high scores.

It's not fair to artificially lower the score of one title just because something else has the coveted 10. Believe us when we groan at the thought of so many great games being released.

Obviously, it's great to have awesome games coming out. What's not great is finding the time and money to collect and play them all.

Rest assured that we do not take the task of reviewing games lightly and we strictly adhere to our scoring guidelines (as set down on page 61). Sometimes there are gaming periods where every game is fantastic and worthy of owning; at other times we go through spells of terrible gaming releases. You'll be able to see our November pain thoughts soon enough, mate.

CAN'T PATCH THIS

Dear OPS,

I picked up a copy of *Resistance 3* on the day of release. Obviously, I loved every minute of it, played through the campaign twice (which took me a few days) and then I decided to give the online component a try. It's about here where I started to lose love for the game.

It started out with having to find the network pass. After 10 minutes of looking, I was getting annoyed until I looked at the back of the manual. A bit embarrassed, but still pumped to try multiplayer, I entered the code and quickly downloaded the network pass and put the game on. But there was more waiting. Up next was the expected but annoying 'day one' patch. When I saw it was 636MB I wondered why a 'day one' patch weighed in at over half a gig! I thought the game was finished? So I turned it off and went and played *Dead Island* and *Space Marine*, instead. Minus the half-a-gig patch.

Gamers are paying top dollar for an unfinished game and now we have to put in a code to play online. What gives?

Jordan Madgwick, via email

Day one patches are becoming disturbingly common... and big, too.

Our download caps and patience are suffering with you on this one, Jordan. Devs be kinder to our download caps!

CAN'T RESIST

Dear OPS,

Working late afternoon shifts and sleeping mornings, I had to wait until the weekend to get *Resistance 3*. I knew EB Games would have plenty of copies, so for once, I didn't bother pre-ordering. Things changed though come Saturday morning. I woke up to several text messages and emails from my friend asking me to buy *Dead Island*. This was a game that has had barely any press and one that I had only properly discovered a few months earlier because I was looking in the 'coming soon' section of PSN.

After being sufficiently impressed by the trailer, I decided to go on a quest to find *Dead Island*. The ability to play cooperatively with my friend drew me to buying it over *Resistance 3*. Living in Hobart meant I could get to most stores within a couple of hours. I tried everywhere... EB Games, Target, Big W, Kmart, JB Hi Fi... nothing. The best I was offered after visiting

around nine stores was to order from the third shipment which would take weeks to arrive, so I settled for buying *Resistance 3*. I've only really seen the amazing teaser for *Dead Island* and one gameplay video. How can watching one CGI trailer and one quick gameplay video change what I want to buy and when I want to buy it? Still, *Resistance 3* is amazing and it is mind-blowingly good

Rob Morrissey, via email

Ah yes, the seductive allure of well-executed cooperative gameplay also weighs heavily on our gaming minds; and *Dead Island* is certainly a worthy choice (our review on page 70).

While we, like you, aren't going to take anything away from the worthy purchase otherwise known as *Resistance 3* (our review on page 68), *Dead Island* is definitely an undead dish best enjoyed with one-to-three other mates. It's also intimidatingly addictive by your lonesome, too.

We definitely have a soft spot for all things co-op, though, and are glad to see that more and more developers are jumping on the tandem-bike-powered cooperative bandwagon. Let's face facts, as far as bandwagons go, this is one of the better models.

And as far as *Dead Island* goes, who would've thought that such a simple formula—zombies + paradise—would work so well? Especially after a lot of the pre-release gripes for *Dead Island* centered around the fact that it would be 'just another zombie game'.

We sincerely hope the naysayers had the foresight to preheat their words before having to eat them.

What's more impressive is that Techland has managed to follow up the disappointing *Call of Juarez: The Cartel* with this extremely impressive undead offering. Kudos.

Cuttings

► Double down

Dead Island is awesome, best damned resort I've ever seen! Just needs one thing: dual wielding.

Brad Wall,
via Facebook

Noted. Do you want dual wielding melee or ballistics? Or maybe a combo? We're making ourselves excited here!

► Like an orange

Because I'm a dumbass can I write in a letter and have you guys put more technical words in to make it sound more smart and appealing?

Chris Farelly,
via Facebook

Yes. But it looks like we didn't need to here.

► Anatomy 101

Assassin's Creed Revelations Beta finally public. Lady boner activated.

Pappington McDeathsash von Bloodkill, via Facebook

We're, uh, not sure what that is. Still, sounds like you're having a good time. Or maybe you're just very pleased to see us.

► Quick one

Do you think single player games will be dead in three years?

Joel Janus Garciall,
via Facebook

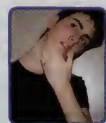
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Disgaea 4

"Delicious JSRPG goodness, the latest entry in what is probably the best series of that sadly dying genre. Why wouldn't you buy it?"



Maddison Jones
Heavy Rain

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Keir Simpson
Blaz Blue: Calamity Trigger

"As a gamer who's been raised on Tekken, it's a new and disturbing experience. Still, totally worth it just for the awesome visuals."

Caption This ►

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The Pitch

The depth of *Fallout* with the combat sensibilities of *Deus Ex* and a pinch of *Uncharted* cinematic glory

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: RPG
EXPECTED RELEASE: MARCH 6 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: BIOWARE
PLAYERS: 1

Mass E

It's time to finish the fight, Commander


There are three sure things in life: death, taxes and the fact that it's going to be nigh impossible for BioWare to screw up the hotly anticipated latest entry to their *Mass Effect* series. They've structured their sequel progression in such a way that it naturally lends itself to 'revolution over evolution', but in a good way. Lose a moon buggy game mechanic here, overhaul the shooting mechanics there, crank the epic-ness to 12 and any other required alterations feel mostly aesthetic. Why can they get away with this? Simple. A strong and persistent narrative that's cleverly personalised has been the all-important thrust for blasting this franchise to lofty heights.

But evolving a series that combines two of the most hardcore genres—shooters and role-playing games—is a delicate balancing act that requires surgeon-like precision. Good thing BioWare has a couple of doctors in the house: co-founding Doctors Ray Muzyka and Gregory P. Zeschuk. "I think there are people that really just loathe the RPG aspects in isolation or who love the action in isolation," said Dr. Muzyka. "We're actually trying to accommodate both of these groups by having option settings that enable you to turn on and off different things and you'll see some of that in *Mass Effect 3* developed even further, so that you can actually approach it more in that RPG sense and more in the action sense."

We recently got to experience a demo of two small sections of the campaign. The first section – set on Earth in the midst of a full-fledged Reaper invasion – is recognisable to anyone who followed the E3 gameplay videos. Although revisiting familiar ground, two things stood out that are worthy of further exploration.

The first was the re-emphasis of the importance of player choice, specifically as it relates to emotionally charged decisions. Towards the end of the demo, Shepard encounters a vent-camping boy who's trying to avoid the Reaper onslaught. Project manager Ryan Warden assured us that these types of small decisions would have lasting ramifications. "This illustrates that in *Mass Effect 3* even the smallest decisions can have powerful consequences. Ones that not only weigh on Commander Shepard's emotions, but they also weigh on the player's."

The second point of interest was the cinematic nature of the level. *Uncharted* was a clear influence on how the careful use of cinematic moments can add to the overall 'wow' factor. Michael Gamble, associate producer at BioWare, had the following to say when we asked about the *Uncharted* connection. "*Uncharted* is actually great because there are a lot of ambient level events that do happen at the same time; it's part of the inspiration. And on Earth in *Mass Effect 3*, it's



“We want to make it so it’s not about right or wrong, **so it’s more ambiguous** and the decisions that you make do have impact later”

Effect 3

actually pretty great in terms of what’s going on in the background. It sets the size and scale.”

Gamble was quick to clarify that *Mass Effect 3* wouldn’t turn into a sequence of one-upmanship between increasingly bigger set pieces. “Not every single level is like that, because it’s not appropriate to have things like that in every level. But where it is appropriate, you have to be able to see it and believe it, right?” We agree, and the result is a *War of the Worlds*-type backdrop that distracts from the task at hand, but in a very good way.


The second part of the demo saw Commander Shepard and co attempting to escort a pregnant female Krogan for an exfiltration from the planet. Naturally, Cerberus soldiers were on hand to ensure that this was no easy task and to also assist with showcasing the tweaked cover system. Cover plays a crucial role in *Mass Effect 3* and what we experienced was best compared to *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*’s cover system, particularly in how it treats corners. You’ll be able to snap in and out of cover, pivot between close cover locations and action roll from corners; or you can move around them while remaining in cover by simply holding a button.

It may sound like a small addition, but it’s utterly crucial; particularly when you face off with frontal-assault-mocking shield-wielding grunts and mini-bosses in Cerberus Atlas mech suits.

When the latter baddies enter an area you’ll want to keep your head low and your arse moving to stay out of their deadly firing arc. Better yet, those that fancy themselves as sharpshooters are encouraged to take out the pilot without disabling the Atlas so they can call the mech their own and dish out their own brand of sci-fi revenge. Serving temperature is an optional extra.

But combat is only one facet of a series that is also revered for its RPG aspects. “We’re also taking the RPG and customisation components to the next level,” said Gamble. “We look at *Mass Effect 2* and we upped the ante there and obviously going from *Mass Effect 2* to 3. We want to make sure that your decisions are impactful; that your decisions have real-life consequences. And we want to make it so it’s not about right or wrong, so it’s more ambiguous and the decisions that you make do have impact later, but at the same time you might not see them in the short-term.”

Mass Effect 3 may have been pushed back into a first-quarter 2012 release window, but this delay can only add to the fan-ticipation and the overall polish expected to be applied to the final product. It’s a fight to the finish, but we’re confident it’s a hell of a finish.

 **Nathan Lawrence**

They Say

“*Mass Effect 3* is a world-class role-playing game experience mixed with a hard-hitting third-person shooter and an immersive story.”

We Say

Deep, epic and bold – we’re hanging out to see how our choices will play out. Still, we’re confident this will check all the right boxes.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING

The Pitch

Konami's kickfest tries to score the first goal

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SPORT

EXPECTED RELEASE:

OCTOBER 13 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE

DEVELOPER: KONAMI

PLAYERS: 1-7

Pro Evolution Soccer 2012

Golden-booted superstar or benchwarmer?

Cue an Academy Award winning fall in about three seconds



What do you mean, you don't like my haircut?

PES's new toyboy

Messi, widely regarded as one of the best players in the world, has been ditched by Konami as their brand face after several years and replaced with flashy Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo. The reason's cited by Konami seem somewhat moot, claiming "...he is the perfect embodiment of everything we have set out to do with the game this year." Please, Konami. You got him cause he crashes Porsches and romances ladeez who wear underwear for a living.

Those cantankerous bulldogs. They won't quit. Be it pride, be it whatever profit they're reaping from their cult-like following, or be it resentment at their Canadian rivals, Shingo "Seabass" Takatsuka and his crew of pixel pushers are refusing to dress up *PES* in its packaging from its PS2 glory days, sing it a hymn, and bury it under a goal post.

Increasingly this is becoming a challenge to justify. Instead of taking a year or two off to rebuild *Pro Evolution* from scratch so it can eyeball *FIFA* like a worthy peer, the powers that be have opted to haul its second-rate rump down the pitch and jerry-rig vague gameplay changes onto its arthritic skeleton.

For instance, there are new improvements to "zonal marking" and "positional defending" so defenders can better cover gaps and intelligently mark opponents. But so far this has proved difficult to spot and therefore difficult to appreciate. The "physicality" of the game has also, apparently, been improved, but after trying to experience this ourselves we felt we were staring at a buck-naked Emperor flaunting invisible threads. Tackling with a 85-kilogram fullback doesn't feel different to wielding a 70-kilogram winger. Certainly it's leagues away from the Personality Plus feature of EA's series.

The most tangible addition in *PES 2012* is the Teammate Control system. When in

possession of the ball, players can direct the right stick to a teammate and press the R3 button to send them on a run. In theory, it sounds frotholocious. Perhaps the biggest shortcoming of *FIFA* is that player runs aren't all that creative – no jinking banana bends or in-and-out weaving. Unfortunately we've been left slightly underwhelmed by it at this point. For one, it isn't all that new; off-the-ball control was tried by *FIFA* years ago. Critically it feels about as natural as scratching your head while playing the trombone. Due to the game's defensive pressure, controlling one ball carrier, designing another player's run, and maintaining possession at the same time is a tough juggle.

Yes, we're cynical at this point. But then again we're also open to the possibility that we simply need more time with the game to appreciate the nuanced features.

Ironically *PES 2012*'s greatest pro is also its greatest con – it doesn't feel all that different from previous versions. Rather than feel dynamic and wild, it still has that stilted feel from the series' roots. There's no convincing sense of momentum to the players when jostling, and even with last year's improved passing, the ball still feels too heavy, like a football that's been left in the rain.

Will that sway the armies of zealous *PES* diehards? Probably not. Stay tuned for the upcoming review. **James Ellis**

They Say

"The focus for *PES 2012* is to ensure the highest level of playability, challenge and realism for the game, whilst also improving the level of control offered to users."

We Say

It's as predictable as Christmas. Die-hards will take to the streets shouting its praises. Everyone else will ignore the new features and buy *FIFA 12*.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

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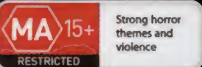
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"Whaddya mean we're a week late for the Renaissance fair?"

Assassin's Creed Revelations

The hunter becomes the hunted

The Pitch

Get stab-happy in a mixture of game modes that offer a very different take on multiplayer

As the end of the year draws close, a multitude of titles are begging for your online time, each offering a multiplayer experience like no other. Before you start lacing up your boots for *FIFA 12* or picking a side in the titanic *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* versus *Battlefield 3* slugfest, why not try something a little more precise and deliberate, that rewards flawless executions and favours patience as you stare death squarely in the face?

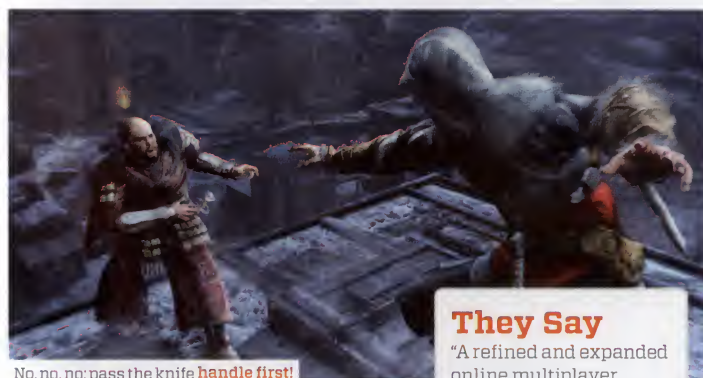
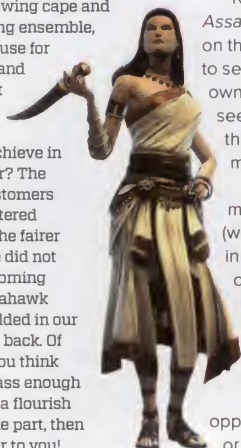
When you think of the *Assassin's Creed* franchise, it doesn't appear to naturally lend itself to an explosive kind of multiplayer. In fact, when Ubisoft announced its addition to *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood* we were more than a little surprised and concerned as to how it would work exactly. Shame on us for not keeping the faith as the multiplayer knocked our socks off and added even more longevity to an already deep gameplay experience.

Recently, Ubisoft offered a taste of what *Assassin's Creed Revelations'* multiplayer has on the cards with a week-long beta available to select U-Play holders and PlayStation Plus owners, and we've got to say, we like what we see. Building on the solid foundation set in the previous incarnation, there are a few new modes to tickle your fancy.

Wanted and Manhunt return, with both modes assigning you a target to neutralise (with several similarly skinned NPCs thrown in as red herrings) on your own or as part of a team while, at the same time, being mindful of the pursuer hot on your trail. Both modes are tense affairs with the only help in locating your target being a compass and line of sight meter. The trick here is to blend in with NPCs and wait for your opponent to make a mistake and take them out, or trigger a chase scene to pursue your quarry

GIRL POWER!

When you're deciding on your skin for your ultimate online assassin, as cool as it is to pick an Altair/Ezio wannabe with glorious flowing cape and eye-catching ensemble, why not pause for a moment and think about what you're trying to achieve in multiplayer? The trickier customers we encountered played as the fairer sex and we did not see them coming until a tomahawk was embedded in our character's back. Of course, if you think you're badass enough to kill with a flourish and look the part, then more power to you!



No, no, no: pass the knife **handle first!**

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE
EXPECTED RELEASE: NOVEMBER 15 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
PLAYERS: 1-8

They Say

"A refined and expanded online multiplayer experience returns with new and additional modes, maps, and characters, allowing you to test your assassin skills against others from around the world."

We Say

Yeah, that's pretty much spot on. If you never thought the *Creed* could work in multiplayer, Ubisoft will make a believer out of you.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

or, conversely, escape your hunter. Patience is definitely the key, as well as AI pattern knowledge to help you move about unnoticed.

New modes include *DeathMatch* which, much like the above two modes without the compass, is contained in smaller areas and has no similarly skinned NPCs to throw you off the scent. *Artifact Assault* is a variation on *Capture the Flag* as you simultaneously try to steal the enemy's precious cargo and defend your own. Map knowledge is key in all modes with certain gates closing after you as you bolt through them to discourage pursuit and they really help to break up the gameplay.

It handled considerably well with only a few little niggles. The matchmaking was a little off with some higher-level entries taking us to school and making us their bitch, regularly. The perks definitely leave an uneven playing field and it can be frustrating to try to get enough kills/points to bridge that gap. On the plus side, we experienced no latency issues. If the beta is any indication – and it ought to be – *Assassin's Creed Revelations* is looking very solid and is sure to drain the life out of you come November.

Dave Kozicki

Take that blue plastic sheeting!

NeverDead

Heads will roll

The Pitch

Immortal demon hunter with detachable body parts fights evil. Hijinks ensue.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBC

DISTRIBUTOR: KONAMI

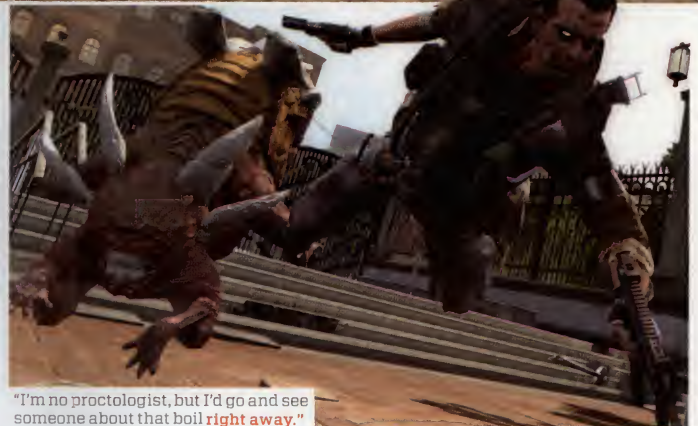
DEVELOPER: REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS

PLAYERS: 1

Death. The big sleep. The great equaliser. For centuries it has perplexed and confounded philosophers, theologians, and scientists, tormenting the thoughtful and restless with its grim immutability. What happens to us when we die? Where do we go? Will there be light refreshments? Questions like these have been asked countless times over the ages, but satisfactory answers remain frustratingly elusive.

Not that *NeverDead* protagonist Bryce Boltzmann minds. Cursed with immortality by spiteful hellspawn, the vagaries of la mort are about as relevant to him as human decency is to lawyers and politicians. Bryce's unkillability is the core around which *NeverDead* is constructed and is being advertised as the game's chief distinguishing feature. However, in a genre where constant death has become something of a design trope (see: *Devil May Cry*, *God of War*, *Ninja Gaiden*) the decision to excise it altogether is a bold and potentially quite risky move. After all, if you can't die, then where does the challenge come from?

The answer lies in another of Bryce's unique characteristics: detachable body parts. Instead of a lifebar or anything else so pedestrian, Bryce's health is measured by how many appendages he happens to have attached. A minor hit will simply knock him down for a bit, rendering him vulnerable to further attack, but more serious damage will see the loss of arms, legs, or even his head. As you might expect, fighting demons when you don't have any limbs or a torso is not exactly easy, which is why you



"I'm no proctologist, but I'd go and see someone about that boil **right away**."

have to do everything in your power to find and reattach them.

As well as his ability to detach and reattach body parts at whim, Bryce can also use them as weapons. In an early section of the demo we played, we found ourselves the target of a slavering horde of demon dogs, and like all doggies, these ones like the play fetch. So what did we do? Well, we could have shot them, or hit them with our big magic demon-slayer sword, but instead we ripped off an arm and tossed it away like a rubber chew toy – and when the puppies chased it like the predictable idiots they are, we exploded the damn thing right in their stupid faces. BOOM. Good doggies. Play dead.

Based on the code we've seen, which is still in an alpha state, *NeverDead* clearly has a great deal of promise, but needs a lot of work if it's going to realise the full potential of its unique premise. At the moment, controls are impossibly clunky and it's much too easy for Bryce to lose all of his limbs at once, meaning we spent a great deal of time rolling around as a disembodied head desperately looking for the rest of our body or waiting for the "regenerate" ability to charge up. Which is kinda funny to begin with, but trust us: the novelty wears thin pretty quickly.

Still, any game where you can rip off your own head and lob it through a window definitely has something going for it, so we're happy to give *NeverDead* the benefit of the doubt for now. This has the potential to be a true AAA game, and we would love to see it turn out that way. Fingers crossed. **Dan Staines**



"Go ahead. Just try and 'disarm' me..."

They Say

"Live forever and become immortal through a unique decapitation and regeneration mechanic that offers a different approach to third-person action gameplay."

We Say

Different, yes – and interesting too. But an improvement? That remains to be seen.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING

SoulCalibur V

The tale of swords and magic comes back for another stab at the fighting crown

The Pitch

A bunch of scantily clad but well modelled guys and girls pick up swords, maces, claws and hammers and belt each other about for a while, searching for a magical blade.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FIGHTING

EXPECTED RELEASE:

TBA 2012

DISTRIBUTOR:

NAMCO

BANDAI

PARTNERS

DEVELOPER:

PROJECT

SOUL

PLAYERS:

1 - TBA

The fighting game genre is enjoying a renaissance at the moment, with (kinda) new iterations of *Marvel vs. Capcom*, *Tekken* and all the *Street Fighter* games you could poke a blistered thumb at either already accounted for, or well on their way. Enter

SoulCalibur V, the latest sequel in the well renowned weapons based fighter series.

This fifth iteration takes place 17 years after the events of *SoulCalibur IV*, yet newcomers should be delighted that the

story arc from the previous four titles will be done away with. It's all in favour of a brand new storyline with a generational shift that developer Project Soul aims to use to attract a greater crowd, apart from long-time fans. Of course, tuning into a fighting game for the plot is like turning on *FIFA* for witty conversation.

After a fairly negative reception towards *SoulCalibur IV*, Project Soul seems determined to overhaul and reinvigorate past gameplay mechanics. Crucially, character movement is now faster, leading towards a final product that appears to be both lighter on its feet, and with a much higher tempo; especially when compared to the sluggish controls of the previous title.

Another addition to the series is 'Critical Edge.' Not an entirely new mechanic, Critical Edge is an evolution of *SoulCalibur IV*'s Critical Finish super moves, criticised by fans as being far too imbalanced within fights. Fill your Critical Edge gauge through a flurry of attacks and before too long you will be presented the ability to perform a special attack, set to shed up to a third of your opponent's health bar. Critical Edge moves won't be as elaborate as specials found in the *Street Fighter* or *Marvel vs. Capcom* series, nor should they act as a deterrent to the action.

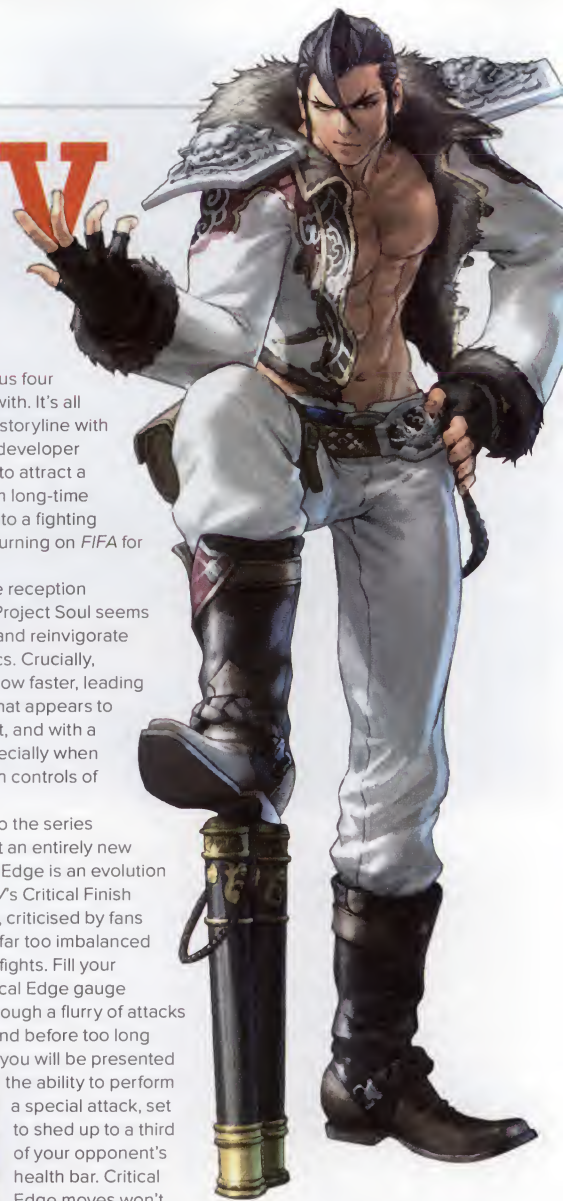
Project Soul is instead opting for a more subtle, seamless execution in an attempt to foster greater overall fluidity.

Then there's 'Quick Move', a revamped side-stepping action that will allow you to dodge an attack, and then quickly duck behind your opponent giving you the chance for a punishing surprise attack. It's all managed via a simple double-tap of the directional pad or stick, making some attacks all the more easy to evade, while strengthening the dynamics for core combat mechanics.

The 17 year gap also means the roster's been significantly altered with a rumoured 30 characters comprised evenly of new additions and old favourites. More distinguished and aged models of Ivy, Maxi and Nightmare will be making appearances, alongside newcomers like Z.W.E.I.; a sword-based fighter with an unorthodox fighting style. The clue's in his name, as 'zwei' means 'two' in German.

With new characters, a freshly revamped fighting system and the inclusions of both Critical Edge and Quick Move, *SoulCalibur V* seems set to reboot the classic fighter and attract new fans towards the series. It's a tough battle ahead for Project Soul, but only time shall tell if they are to come out victorious.

Adam Guetti



They Say

"*SoulCalibur V* will continue to advance the series' legacy of white-knuckled weapon-based combat, gorgeous graphics and groundbreaking features that will amaze newcomers and long-time fans alike"

We Say

Stick in the create-a-fighter mode and a decent adventure that isn't just a romp up the arcade ladder and this'll be a winner. Those gameplay tweaks are going to make enemies out of friends, too - we like.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING



Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning

Whaddy get when you cross *God of War* with *Oblivion*?

At first glance, *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning* seems like just another generic open-world RPG. There's an amnesiac hero, back from the dead, on a quest to reclaim his (or her!) identity and thwart the malevolent plans of some unfathomable evil. There are elves, gnomes, goblins, and probably dragons too. Also, though we haven't seen one yet, we're betting there'll be at least a dozen characters with an unpronounceable jumble of consonants and apostrophes for names. "Welcome, stranger! My name is Bul'shytt P'yztkel! Welcome to our humble village!"

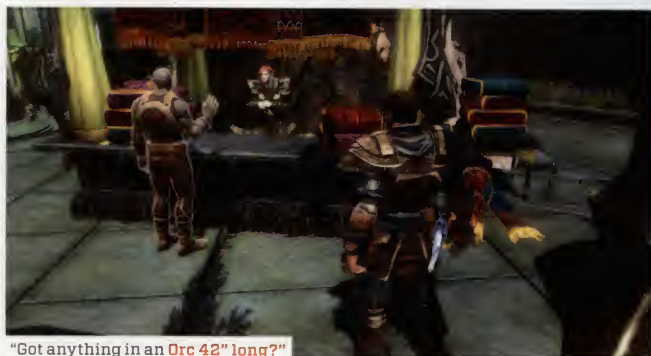
Appearances can be deceiving. For starters, consider that *Reckoning* is the product of a self-described team of "visionaries" including former Bethesda designer Ken Ralston, *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane, and acclaimed fantasy novelist R.A. Salvatore. That's some pretty serious pedigree, and based on what we've already seen, it's clearly being put to good use. *Amalur* is a richly storied kingdom alive with detail: part *Fable*, part *Forgotten Realms*, with just a dash of Middle Earth. It's exactly the sort of place you could lose yourself for weeks at a time.

Publicised as the game's centrepiece, combat in *Reckoning* is an action-oriented affair heavily influenced by games like *God of War* and *Dynasty Warriors*. Rather than focus on stats and dice rolls and all the rest of the boring junk, 38 Studios has instead emphasised timed strikes, combos, and strategic use of special power attacks, which vary according to how you develop your character.

Interestingly, *Reckoning* abandons typical RPG character development mechanics in favour of something a little more flexible and fluid. Players aren't locked into classes, but are free to pursue a wide variety of different abilities as they progress, effectively allowing them to create unique hybrids suited to their particular play-style. Of course, other games have made similar claims which turned out to be total bullshit, but since 38 Studios seems especially committed to delivering on this front, we're cautiously optimistic.

So that's *Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning* – a game most of you probably hadn't heard of 'til now, that nevertheless has a very good chance of becoming a genre classic. Keep your eyes on this one, guys.

Dan Staines



"Got anything in an Orc 42" long?"

The Pitch

Oblivion with deeper combat and a better story

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION RPG
EXPECTED RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: 38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGE GAMES
PLAYERS: 1

They Say

"*Reckoning* will offer unrivaled RPG action combat, seamlessly integrating magical and melee attacks into an innovative and visceral experience."

We Say

Obvious marketing guff, but possibly not too far off the mark, given what we've already seen.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

KONAMI



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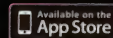


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This is your last chance Sonic. If you're crap, we will cut the cable



Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: PLATFORMER

EXPECTED RELEASE:

OCTOBER

DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

DEVELOPER: SONIC TEAM

PLAYERS: 1

Sonic Generations

The great blue hope

We don't need to document how much strife the blue blur's been through in the last few years. The *Sonic 4* project put Sonic back to where most gamers wanted him in 2D form but seems to have stalled on *Episode 1*. Enter *Sonic Generations*, an overt celebration of 20 years of Sonic that – in Sega's eyes – recognises the best parts of his previous titles and hopes that the old and new can mix and be entertaining, whilst throwing in a few surprises along the way.

From what we've seen they're mostly getting it right. Classic (Mega Drive, pot-bellied, black-eyed Sonic) and Modern (Dreamcast and onwards, sleek with green eyes) Sonics take it in turns to race through stages from the last couple of decades. Classic's all about side-on, 3D models in a 2D plane, big loops and a spin dash initiated from a standing start. Modern shifts to a behind-the-character third-person view with a 'boost' function that barrels through enemies.

Each stage riffs on levels that have appeared since 1991. We played Green Hill

Zone (*Sonic The Hedgehog*), Chemical Plant Zone (*Sonic The Hedgehog 2*) and City Escape (*Sonic Adventure 2*), and both of the acts within the zones are thematically similar, with the 2D level sharing with its 3D counterpart.

It goes deeper than graphical overhauls, as the music has been re-arranged too. A string version of the Green Hill Zone theme sounds absolutely blissful, though you'll only hear that gem in the new interactive menus.

At the end of each zone you'll have to physically make your way to the next, but exploration in the meta world accesses a bunch of new ancillary challenges. Some will be a time trial pitting Classic and Modern against each other on an existing Act, while some will be stages using elements found within the Zones. The points you earn from challenges (and within Acts) are then spent in a store to either improve Sonic's abilities, or give him an advantage when starting a stage. For instance, we saw an item that put him back on his feet quicker after being knocked down by an enemy, and another that gave him a shield at the start of an Act. One of the big ticket items was a Mega Drive controller, while the console itself sat in the platforms surrounding the entry to the Green Hill Zone.

We're not sure where we stand with this. The point is to celebrate Sonic's last 20 years of being the fastest and coolest guy around who rarely used more items than a fast pair of boots and shield. Yet, the mechanic in itself has merit in encouraging players to go back over what they've done before but better and faster. The end of an Act spits out a ranking, and you've really got to work hard to earn an 'A' or 'S' rank.

Ultimately, we came away smiling. The game's challenging and it's definitely charming, and despite a few clipped frames it's gorgeous to look at with bright, saturated colours and multi-layered, rollercoaster levels. *Generations* could be the best Sonic game in years.

Paul Taylor

The Pitch

Combine the best bits of the '90s and the least worst bits of this century, and take out all the forgettable playable characters

They Say

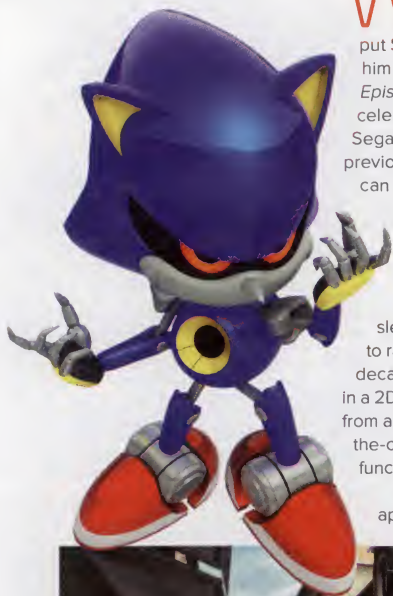
"We are bringing back the nostalgia of the early days of Sonic and combining it with the innovation and stunning HD technology of the modern gaming era."

We Say

It's focussing on speed, style and good looks, and as long as the power-ups you unlock don't dramatically change the gameplay we're confident Sonic Team have made gamer's wishes come true.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING



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Prototype 2

Revenge is a dish best served with mutant superpowers



What's the symbolism?



You wanna hug it out? Come, tactically cling on, ogre

The Pitch

A third-person open-world action game starring a superhero on a super-bad day

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE:

APRIL 2012

DISTRIBUTOR:

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER: RADICAL

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS: 1

Alex Mercer, of the original *Prototype*, is a bad man. At least, that's what Blackwatch, militant nasties, and Sergeant James Heller, protagonist of *Prototype 2*, believe. Heller isn't feeling neighbourly towards Mercer who he holds responsible for his family's death and ultimate conversion into a freakish super-mutant. But Mercer is nowhere to be found. Blackwatch wants both mutants dead and New York City is now being not-so-affectionately referred to as 'New York Zone'.

Our hands-off *Prototype 2* demo started in the so-called 'Yellow Zone' of New York Zone. MacLean Marshall from Radical Entertainment summed it up as such, "It's where everybody who escaped the red zone ended up and it's basically overcrowded, it's a slum, it's a shanty town, it smells." What was instantly noticeable was a much-needed graphical overhaul from the original *Prototype*; everything looks a whole

lot prettier in *Prototype 2*. Or, in the instance of the Yellow Zone, a whole lot smellier. Heller strolled through with the skin of a Blackwatch soldier liberated via gruesome possession. The over-the-top assimilation and general goriness of the original is back. This time, though, you actually feel like you're beneath the skin of an assimilated character. Blackwatch, it seems, are closer to Nazi than Salvation Army on the human rights scale, as the general populace offered Heller a wide berth as he moved among them.

When Heller came across a group of guards protecting a Gentek scientist, Marshall highlighted a greater emphasis on stealth this time around. "You don't have to be the guy that runs in and destroys everything. You can be the guy that sneaks in and sneaks out again." An all-new Awareness System lets you send out a pulse to see which enemies can be assimilated stealthily and which are being watched.

In *Prototype* stealth was an option, but not really a viable one. Now stealthy players will be able to find satisfaction from much-improved game mechanics. Thankfully, player choice isn't merely limited to Sam Fisher or Arnold Schwarzenegger types, either. Players will be able to bind two powers to particular buttons, instead of selecting powers on the fly from a paused power wheel. This means that the patient and observant player will be rewarded for, say, noticing that an intended battlefield is populated with both soldiers and tanks. Soldiers don't fare well against claws, while tanks tend to get pummeled by Hulk-like hammer fists.

While Radical Entertainment has been wise to instigate a fertile middle ground for incrementally stepping up the action from one to 11 — something absent from *Prototype* — combat looks even more satisfying this time around. Time your tactical dodge perfectly when fighting a towering mutant and you'll flip over its head for a perfect counter opportunity. While you're at it, rip his arm off and use it as a projectile. Better yet, tear a dragon rocket launcher from a low-flying Blackwatch chopper and reign fiery destruction on everyone around you. It's safe to say that the sheer amount of combat one-upmanship potential on offer here will be enough to satisfy any action junkie.

Nathan Lawrence



One-upmanship via uppercut

You'll be able to hijack military vehicles such as tanks, APCs and helicopters, but where's the fun in that? Earn enough combat cred and you'll open up takedowns, such as ripping a turret off a tank and smashing the chassis into smithereens. But, most importantly of all, Radical Entertainment is taking the original game's ability to fly kick a chopper to the next level. "Everyone was so enamoured with the joy of flying into the air and ninja kicking a helicopter out of the sky. So we were like, 'How do you take that to the next level in *Prototype 2*?' Our answer is the ability to uppercut a helicopter out of the sky," said Marshall.

They Say

"A sequel that offers players a lot more tangible choice"

We Say

Minor camera woes aside, *Prototype 2* is shaping up to be the go-to game for whetting the appetite of any gamer who seeks wanton destruction

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

The Pitch

Okay, like, imagine *Silent Hill* Hill – but in the RAIN!

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SURVIVAL HORROR

EXPECTED RELEASE:

OCTOBER 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE

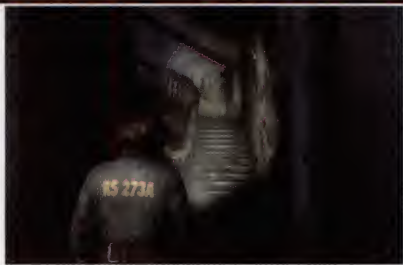
DEVELOPER: VATRA GAMES

PLAYERS: 1

A new colour in the Dulux range: spooky as all hell blood red

Silent Hill: Downpour

Rain, rain, go away...



It's no secret that the *Silent Hill* series has been on the decline for a long time now. Recent instalments like *Shattered Memories* and *Homecoming* do a decent enough job of replicating the tone and structure of the first three games, but lack the malevolent genius and penetrating psychological insight for which the franchise was once celebrated. Developed by Czech studio Vatra Games, *Silent Hill: Downpour* is being billed as a return to form – a comprehensive reboot that seeks to win back wayward fans and re-establish the brand's critical prestige and commercial vigour.

The game opens with a crash. On the outskirts of a murky backwater named Silent Hill, a clattering prison bus laden with convicts careens into a fog-shrouded forest and down a gaping chasm, killing everyone on board except a single dour inmate: protagonist Murphy Pendleton. In keeping with his franchise predecessors, Pendleton is an Average Joe with a dark past and heavy conscience. The demo never reveals exactly what he did to earn his spot in the big house, but based on his various tortured mutterings and the game's title, we predict it has something to do with water – like, maybe he drowned a box of puppies or flooded an orphanage or something.

Gameplay in *Downpour* is a traditional mix of exploration, puzzle solving, and combat – more or less in that order. In our demo we were given the chance to investigate the game's opening areas, including a dilapidated petrol station, abandoned '50s-style diner (replete with working jukebox), and some kind of skycar depot. It's worth noting that, while Vatra's designers have done an excellent job using these locations to convey an overwhelming

sense of isolation and dread, it's clear much work remains to be done optimising the game's engine, which presently suffers from inconsistent framerates and obscene amounts of vertical tearing.

A little more troubling than *Downpour*'s technical issues – which aren't unusual for pre-release code – is the prevalence of instant death scenarios. For example, one of the game's very first puzzles sees you trapped in a room with rising water and a crackling breaker box, the idea being to shut off the water before it reaches the box and electrocutes you. The problem is that it's not at all clear that's what you're supposed to do, and it was only by frantically pressing the \otimes all over the place that we figured it out. If you're going to put the player in a situation where they either do something or die, you need to make it obvious what that something is, otherwise... frustration. Lots and lots of frustration.

Having only seen a small portion of the *Downpour*, it would be remiss of us to judge it too harshly at this point. That said, the fact of the matter is that what we've seen so far is a little disappointing, and doesn't augur well for a game intended to rejuvenate an entire franchise. Here's hoping things improve between now and October.

Dan Staines



What's your favourite band, buddy?
The Crate-ful Dead? Geddit?

They Say

"All new and updated *Silent Hill* experience... brings the town of Silent Hill, its characters, the creatures and the alternate hell world into vivid and spectacular display."

We Say

Silent Hill is many things, but "vivid" and "spectacular"? It's not a scenic getaway, guys.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE

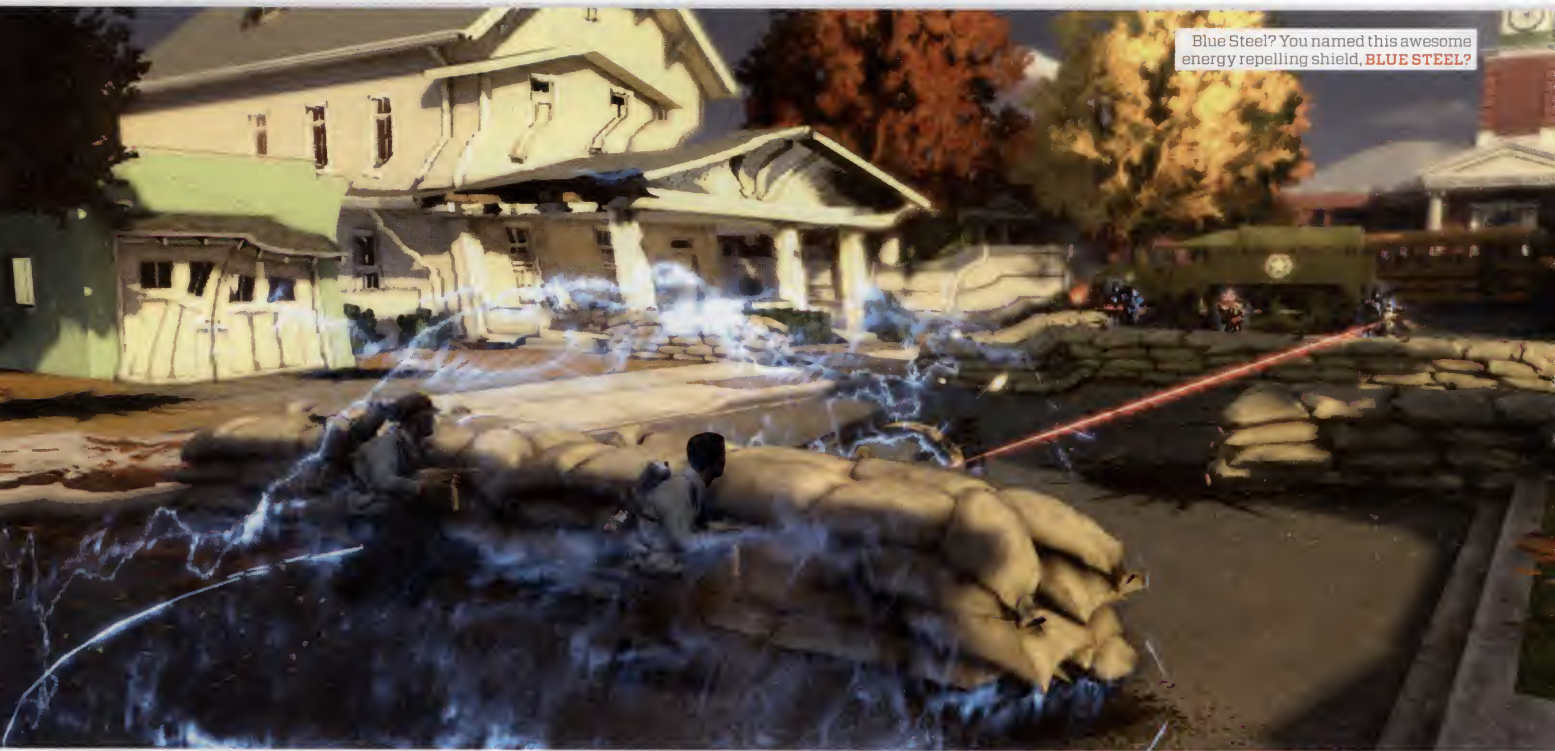
NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING



Blue Steel? You named this awesome energy repelling shield, **BLUE STEEL?**

XCOM

Across the gulf of space, insidious beings regard our Earth with envious eyes

Rebooting a beloved videogame franchise is never an easy thing. Gamers are a notoriously fickle lot and seldom appreciate it when someone goes messing with their cherished memories for commercial gain. For developers, it's often a case of being between the devil and the deep blue sea. On the one hand they have to try and please existing fans by remaining faithful to source material, but on the other they're obliged to revamp and revitalise – to make the old new again and attract a fresh generation of enthusiasts with all the bells and whistles we've come to expect of modern videogames.

Thus the dilemma of *XCOM*. A first-person reboot of an isometric strategy classic, it treads a fine line between old and new, attempting to blend the tactics of the turn-based original with the visceral appeal of a modern shooter. To achieve this goal, developer 2K Marin has taken obvious inspiration from Bioware's exemplary *Mass Effect* titles, borrowing the tactical command-wheel system perfected in those games and repurposing it to provide a slightly more in-depth strategic experience.

At any time during combat, you're free to pause time and issue a selection of class-specific commands to your various squad members, each of whom can be customised to fulfill specific roles on the battlefield. While some of the game's earlier challenges can apparently be overcome with a straight run-and-gun approach, as the story progresses and enemy resistance ramps up, it becomes increasingly necessary to play tactically and to effectively deploy squad-mates to make the most their unique abilities.

Set in the US during the early '60s, when American culture was a melting pot of post-



Phew! Lucky I had the upholstery **Armor-Allied**

WWII optimism and Cold War paranoia, it tells the story of an alien invasion – but not the sort you'd see in a B-grade science fiction film. There are no little green men with laser guns here, nor monstrous insectoids with acid-dripping mandibles. These aliens are mysterious, aberrant, almost eldritch in their inscrutability. As a member of *XCOM* (a contraction of Extra-terrestrial Combat Squad) it's not only your job to combat these enigmatic invaders, but to understand them in a military, scientific, and psychological sense. What ARE these things? How do they work? What do they want?

This sense of mystery and investigation also informs *XCOM*'s research mechanics, which revolve around the task of retrieving alien technology from the field, sending it back to the lab for analysis, and then re-deploying it against the monsters who invented it. Of course, if you're the impatient sort, you can just use whatever you find as soon as you find it, but then you miss out on the benefits of truly understanding the tech and being able to mass produce it for later missions. Choices, choices, choices – they're what good games are all about, and *XCOM* offers them by the bucketload.

Will this be the game *XCOM* zealots have been waiting for more than a decade? Almost certainly not. There are some people you just can't please, but you know what? That's their loss. For everyone else, this has the potential to be something pretty special indeed.

Dan Staines

They Say

"The American Dream is crumbling all around you as the invaders corrupt the country, one town at a time."

We Say

Sounds good, but hopefully 2K avoids the chest-thumping jingoism typical of American alien invasion stories

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

The Pitch

Squad-based tactics meets shooter action with a dash of RPG-style character progression

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

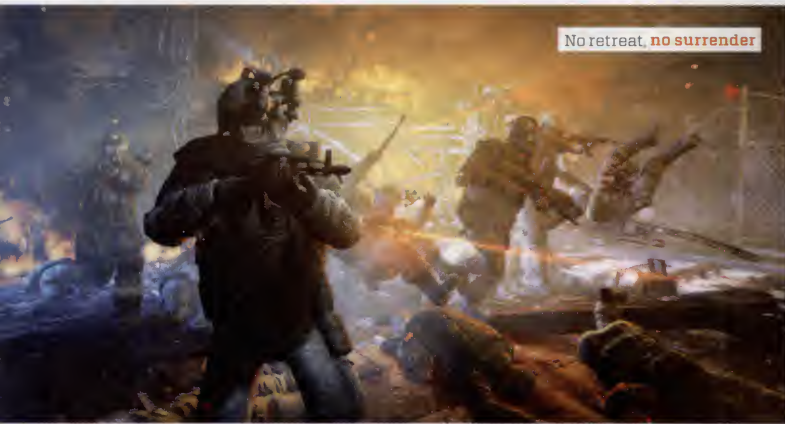
EXPECTED RELEASE:

MARCH 6 2012

DISTRIBUTOR: 2K GAMES

DEVELOPER: 2K MARIN

PLAYERS: 1



No retreat, no surrender



A wretched hive of... you know the rest

"Crap. Some bastard's parked me in!"



Metro: Last Light

Bleaker than a sobbing Goth at a Cure concert

The Pitch

A survival-horror shooter set in a harrowing post-apocalyptic society on the verge of collapse

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE:

TBC 2012

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: 4A GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-MULTI (TBC)

Direct sequel to a cult classic that unfortunately never saw the light of day on PS3, *Metro: Last Light* is about as grim and depressing as a videogame can get without actively encouraging you to commit suicide.

Set in post-apocalyptic Moscow – which, if we're being honest, is probably not all that dissimilar from pre-apocalyptic Moscow – it paints a portrait of humankind teetering on the brink of oblivion. Unable to live in the irradiated wastes above ground, those 'fortunate' enough to survive the atomic armageddon are forced below, into the labyrinthine subways. What were once train stations are quickly transformed into fortified city-states: paranoid and mutually antagonistic mini-cultures, each vying for the right to rule the ruins of civilisation.

But there may yet be hope. Though the air above is still toxic, the soil frozen, and mutants abundant, there are indications that the Earth is somehow tending its wounds, healing itself. In the role of Artyom (who returns as protagonist from the first game) your goal is to track down a man known simply as 'The Prisoner' – a mysterious individual who reputedly holds the key to the planet's recovery, and thus humanity's continued existence.

But of course, in this treacherous

subterranean world, finding someone isn't simply a matter of looking them up in the Yellow Pages or popping round their house for a visit. To complete his mission, Artyom must traverse the subterranean tunnels, infiltrate station-states, and deal with murderous neo-fascist fanatics who would like nothing more than to capture The Prisoner for their own nefarious purposes. Oh, and yes: he'll also have to contend with 'anomalies' – supernatural horrors mysterious as they are deadly.

No easy task, and if *Metro 2033* is any indication, *Last Light* will not be an easy game. In a world where guns and ammunition are scarce, and enemies are many, frugality and efficiency are necessary. Moreover, Artyom isn't a superman: one or two well-placed shots will see him hit the dirt, which is why it is often advisable to play it stealthy and strike from the shadows. For example, instead of shooting the guard standing under the big spotlight, a better idea might be to shoot the spotlight and then slit the guard's throat. Quick and quiet – that's the key to survival in this game.

As well as a meaty single-player campaign, *Last Light* will also include a multiplayer component, though 4A aren't ready to share details yet. Fingers crossed for co-op, eh?

Dan Staines

They Say

"Experience thrilling combat with an exotic arsenal of hand-made weaponry against deadly foes"

We Say

Great! Just make sure it isn't as fiddly and frustrating as it was in the first game

Verdict

BAD SHAPE

NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING

World's Wackiest Parking: Episode I

Ridge Racer Unbounded

Slam, bam and no Pac-Man

The Pitch

Helter skelter thrills of *Burnout* whilst taking note of how *Split/Second* destructively redecorates its locales

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

EXPECTED RELEASE:

TBC 2012

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: BUGBEAR

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

It's been an arcade stalwart for nearly two decades and even unsuccessfully tried being a sim with *R: Racing*. With *Unbounded*, the *Ridge Racer* series has officially just become as splintered as the concrete pillars its cars are slamming through. This offshoot of the franchise has more in common with Criterion's *Burnout* and also *Split/Second* from (the now defunct) Blackrock Studio. Instead of familiar holiday brochure landscapes that thrust racers up and over azure coastlines, emerald countrysides and past glittering skyscrapers, you're going to be tearing holes in customisable cities – there's even a track editor.

Despite its rollercoaster tracks *Ridge* in the past was clinical. Cars bounced off each other and the surprisingly smooth scenery. Its AI was happy parading its way to the chequered flag. Insultingly, drifting counterclockwise round a right hand turn was perfectly fine (just take a moment to think about the physics of that). While it was entertaining to look at it's now hard to shake the feeling you were riding in a car on rails whilst the background whipped past.

Unbounded's more about aggression. Cars get scuffed, scratched, fall apart and, with enough punishment, explode before resetting back on to the track. Clipping small objects won't bring you to a standstill as your motor will instead smash through. Some destructible items are just detritus in the best racing line, and skittling them off the route rewards with a few extra points for your end of race total.

Changes like these make sense coming from the mob behind the bogan-but-delightful



That lane is for buses only...Douché!

FlatOut. Still looking over Blackrock's shoulder at its answer sheet, Bugbear have included more substantial shortcuts which require you to drift, jump, slipstream and slam in order to fill your power meter. A full meter triggers a prompt to interact with objects in the environment, pointing them out with a fat target and gigantic hovering letters disengaged from the HUD. Activate one and a cinematic set piece follows, so when you burst through the side of a hotel from the second storey you can see the rubble and destroyed signage spraying onto the streets from the other side of the wall.

That newly-created hole is now a handy shortcut that takes you off the street. Much like *Split/Second* some of these interactive moments double as traps to wipe out any tailgaters who are mooching off your success.

Your power meter's useful for knocking opponents out of the race, too. Opponents have a simple health meter that hovers above their roof and by spending your entire meter you can knock them out of the race. No juice? Employ dodgem tactics by ramming or shunting them into the scenery.

This chapter is a massive offshoot for a series that's more poser than performer. *Unbounded* makes *Ridge Racer* of old look antiquated, and we can't possibly imagine going back to anything else. **Paul Taylor**

They Say

"You think you've seen crashes? You've seen nothing... your car is a high-octane wrecking ball"

We Say

The trail's been blazed by *Burnout* and *Split/Second* but the fire burns bright. It scoffs at *Ridge's* rules and makes something that's equivalent of sticking a chilli in each nostril and breathing in

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING



Track mania

So, bored of ripping round the same old cities and destroying familiar buildings whilst making a car flambe of your opponents? Some people are never satisfied. Quell your boredom with a simple looking tile editor to make your own tour of destruction. Simply dip into the virtual Scalextric box, pull out a section of track and stitch it in. We're betting that multiple bases will be available to colour in the overall 'feel' of the track while it's up to you to generate exciting courses. Once you're happy send it online to your mates. We can't wait.



The Fast and the Furious: Flambe Five

As the great Julius Caesar might say, she came, she sawed, she conquered



Lollipop Chainsaw

Lollipop, lollipop, oh lolli-lolli-lolli-lollipop



Meet Juliet Starling. A fun-loving cheerleader with a fondness for strawberry lollipops, her likes include karaoke, going to the movies, and hanging out with friends. Just your typical American teen, right? Wrong. While most of her friends from San Romero High spend their afterschool hours studying or having fun or working menial jobs for minimum wage, Juliet dedicates her free time to more... unusual pursuits. Like dismembering the undead with a magic chainsaw.

You see, Juliet's a zombie hunter: a member of an ancient warrior sect sworn to protect humanity from the slaving hordes that threaten to unravel the very fabric of our reality. So when an undead apocalypse breaks out right in the middle of her home town — on her 18th birthday, no less — Juliet doesn't run screaming or collapse into a sobbing heap or even whine about having her party ruined. Instead she whips out her chainsaw and goes to work, slicing and dicing the zombie hordes until every single

one of them unholy bastards is safely back in the ground where they belong.

Directed by the notoriously eccentric Suda51, *Lollipop Chainsaw* bears all the hallmarks of his previous work. Obscene and absurd in equal measure, it revels in juxtaposition and subverting player expectations. On the one hand you've got an intensely visceral undead kill-a-thon liberally laced with profanity and carnage, but then you've got a perky protagonist killing monsters with a chainsaw that turns blood into rainbows and viscera into love-hearts. Chop a zombie's head off and your reward won't be a geyser of gore, but a polychromatic eruption of light and sparkles that wouldn't look out of place in a *My Little Pony* cartoon.

This contrast between kawaii fun times and wanton slaughter is further emphasised in the dual nature of Juliet's attacks. To make the most of her chainsaw, which more or less functions as a kind of special attack, Juliet must use her skills as a cheerleader to corral brainless ghouls into groups where they can be more easily dispatched. So one minute she'll be gleefully prancing around with her pom-poms, chanting can-do slogans and cartwheeling all over the place, and then she'll suddenly be slicing heads off *en masse*. As well as being quite hilarious, this system implies a level of strategic depth typically absent from the hack-n-slash genre. It's not just about killing zombies, but killing them in the most efficient way possible. Juliet's a pro — and your job as the player is to live up to that.

Those of you familiar with Suda51's previous work on *Shadows of the Damned* might be wondering whether or not *Lollipop Chainsaw* is just another example of juvenile excess masking what is ultimately a fairly mediocre experience. That's a legitimate concern, but given what little we've seen of the game at this point, it's simply too early to make that call. All we can say for now is that *Lollipop Chainsaw* looks like a helluva lot of fun and we are definitely looking forward to seeing more of it in the near future. **Dan Staines**

The Pitch

Sex, blood, and rock and roll

Info

PLATFORM: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
EXPECTED RELEASE: 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER: GRASSHOPPER
MANUFACTURE
PLAYERS: 1

They Say

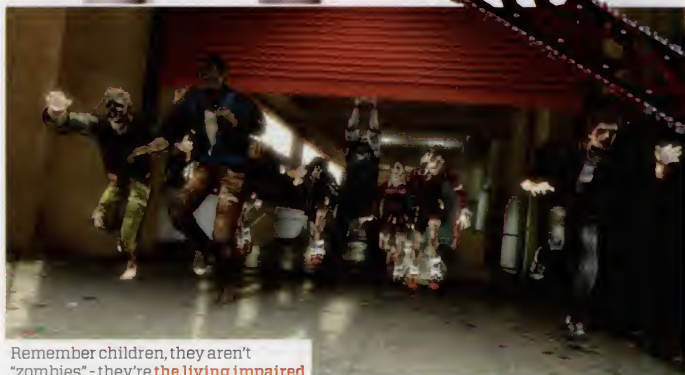
"With her wickedly awesome chainsaw in hand, Juliet slices, dices and splits her way through hordes of the undead."

We Say

And also, she's toootally not a rip-off of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Ahem.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING



Remember children, they aren't "zombies" - they're the living impaired

Also inbound



Gotham City Impostors

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** FPS **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBC 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** WARNER BROS. **DEVELOPER:** MONOLITH **PLAYERS:** 1-8

Designed to capitalise on the success of games such as *Team Fortress 2* and *Call of Duty*, Monolith's *Gotham City Impostors* is an online shooter in which two teams (one dressed like Batman, the other like The Joker) go head-to-head in a variety of vibrant environments inspired by the DC Comics universe.

Of particular interest is the extensive character creation system, which will let players customise their avatars to the nth degree with a selection of duds, gadgets, and guns. Dibs on Mr Freeze's ice ray!



NBA 2K12

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** SPORTS **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER 7 **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES **DEVELOPER:** VISUAL CONCEPTS **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

2K Sports is being weirdly secretive about *NBA 2K12*, refusing to reveal any substantial information about the game despite the fact that it's due out very soon. Coy devils!

Essentially all we know at this point is that there will be three versions of the game available, each featuring a different NBA legend on the cover: Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, and Magic Johnson. We're leaning towards getting the Jordan version ourselves, but would settle for Magic if we had to. Larry Bird, though? Pffft. As if.



Skull Girls

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** FIGHTING **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBC 2011 **DISTRIBUTOR:** AUTUMN GAMES **DEVELOPER:** REVERGE LABS **PLAYERS:** 1-2

An absolutely gorgeous brawler in the vein of genre classics like *Darkstalkers* and *Marvel vs. Capcom 2*, the premise of *Skull Girls* is delightfully straightforward. Basically it goes: hot girls with massive boobs beat the crap out of each other. The end.

Directed by renowned 2D-fighter guy Mike-Z and featuring art by some dude who apparently worked on *Scott Pilgrim*, *Skull Girls* has the potential to become an instant hardcore favourite. Look out for it on PSN in the (hopefully) not-too-distant future.



Rage

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** SHOOTER/RACING **EXPECTED RELEASE:** OCTOBER 6 **DISTRIBUTOR:** AIE **DEVELOPER:** ID SOFTWARE **PLAYERS:** 1-6

A shooter/racing game hybrid with light RPG elements, *Rage* is id Software's most expansive and ambitious game to date. Think *Mad Max* meets *Borderlands* meets *Motorstorm Apocalypse*, then add in a revolutionary next-gen graphics engine built by one of the best coders in the business – the inimitable John Carmack.

Sounds good, right? Of course it bloody well does. All hyperbole aside, *Rage* has a very good chance of being the best game released this year, and frankly we cannot wait to get our hands on it.



Voltron: Defender of the Universe

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBC OCTOBER **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ **DEVELOPER:** BEHAVIOR INTERACTIVE **PLAYERS:** 1-5

Oh man, *Voltron*! We remember *Voltron*! Not in any great detail, mind – we just know it was one of our favourite cartoons from the 80s and that the toys were, like, *super neat*.

Will *Defender of the Universe* do justice to the hazy rose-tinted memories of our youth? Probably not! Even so, it does look like a pretty decent top-down shooter, and the five player co-op mode (where each player controls their own lion in the Voltron force) has the potential to be rad to the max.



Ninja Gaiden 3

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION **EXPECTED RELEASE:** TBC 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** TEAM NINJA **DEVELOPER:** TEAM NINJA **PLAYERS:** 1

Ninja Gaiden without dismemberment and decapitation? What lunacy is this? Now, we're not bloodthirsty sadists or anything, but come on; isn't the whole point of *Ninja Gaiden* chopping dudes to bits? Not only is it fun, it's also a tactical necessity, particularly in the second game.

Well, whatever. So long as Team Ninja retain the fluid, satisfying combat and punishing difficulty of the previous games, then maybe we'll forgive them their sudden bout of uncharacteristic squeamishness. Maybe, if they're lucky.

Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker HD

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION **EXPECTED RELEASE:** NOVEMBER **DISTRIBUTOR:** MINDSCAPE **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI **PLAYERS:** 1-6

Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker was terrific as a PSP game, but there's no doubt it suffered from the limitations inherent to the platform. Controlling the camera with the control-pad, for example, was a total pain in the behind, especially during encounters with the game's many annoyingly mobile bosses.

Thank goodness, then, that Konami has seen fit to re-release it on the PS3. The simple addition of another analogue stick and extra shoulder buttons makes *Peace Walker* that much more comfortable to play, and there's definitely something to be said for the benefits of a big screen. Graphics look a bit dodgy, though. The game is meant to be "HD" but in reality it's more like "stretched SD". Disappointing.



WRC

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CHAMPIONSHIP

2



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A GOD TO



YSSEY REMEMBER

Call of Duty XP. Callapalooza. CoDstock 2012. The Blops Day Out. Whichever label you give to this inaugural expo in Los Angeles it equals excitement and adventure. Firstly, because it represents our first multiplayer hands on with the behemoth that is Modern Warfare 3. Secondly, it's three days of being around the intoxicating buzz generated by the sort of CoD fans that pay \$150 a head just to be there. Lastly, it's an event to remember because you finally get to shoot those online people for realsies, with paintballs. Blame the lag all you like...



We're standing in a gargantuan hangar. It was once big enough to house Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose. Or, if that 1940s aviation reference doesn't fly for you, it's spacious enough to serve as the Cloverfield monster's kennel. We're in the middle of this space, but as the darkness before us is pierced with more green lasers than a *Star Wars* dogfight, it reveals a mind-numbing amount of *Call of Duty* players camped together in one spot. We catch ourselves wishing for some Semtex.

As the enraptured masses receive the keynote speech from Activision's Eric Hirshberg and Robert Bowling of Infinity Ward, we're shuffled to a VIP section of the facility. Here we get the same spiel, but it's interwoven with actual hands on with *Modern Warfare 3*'s multiplayer and its stat-obsessed sister application *Call of Duty Elite*.

It's clear from the get go that Sledgehammer Games are giving the player more choices this time around and are supporting a larger number of play styles than ever have before. The team goes so far as to call it the most balanced multiplayer game in the series. In *Modern Warfare 2* there was a huge difference in the experience between the expert player and the newcomer. Too many times would the new guy be preyed upon by the old dog's kill streaks every two seconds.

For the experienced player, *Modern Warfare 3* aims to be better and more strategic than ever before. It's still got that tried-and-true, gun-on-gun gameplay; the close-quarters combat that is the signature of the series. In *MW3* we're assured the balance has been tweaked on everything: classes, weapons, kill streaks, map layouts, speed of movements for your player and perks. That means no One Man Army, no game ending (wall punching) nuke, no shotguns as secondary,



Flea market price haggling has never been so intense

definitely no Commando perk and no Last Stand. Sledgehammer attributes all of these alterations to the "awesome dialogue" they have with their fans. PR translation: hordes of forum grievers.

This feedback has lead to an all new kill streak system know as 'strike packages'. Although many people despised them to begin with, kill streaks ended up being a great addition to the series. Sledgehammer has taken the concept back to the drawing board and analysed how they were used across the broader game types. When they examined their objectives modes, like Domination and Capture the Flag or Search and Destroy, where the players were focussed on doing the job

rather than ranking up the kills, it became clear that kill streaks were optimised for only one game type: Team Deathmatch.

Therefore, they've completely expanded the concept of kill streaks so that we're rewarded not only for burying our fellow man, but for completing objectives and earning points for assists with Hardline Pro. All of those achievements will lead you to your next point streak reward which you can now customise in one of three packages to suit your own particular sociopathic play style. They're called Assault, Support and Specialist.

You still select your point streak rewards, but each strike package has its own set of unique rewards which should fundamentally change the way a match is played. For those of you who love killing as many chumps as humanly possible, the Assault strike package is for you. This is the familiar kill streak system that you know and love now with player-driven kill streaks like Assault Drones and Osprey gunning.

The Support strike package is different and rewards players for helping the team as a whole, and not just upping their murder ratio.

"No One Man Army, no game ending (wall punching) nuke, no shotguns as secondary, definitely no Commando perk and no Last Stand"

Come Fly / Die With Me

As is obvious from the many teaser trailers for *MW3*, this is a global conflict that winds up destroying a lot of backyards. Here's a quick jet-setters guide to the maps of World War III.

Underground

Anybody who has been to London and hated their train system will have a blast here. This is a bombed-out Tube station that features a tonne of places to do battle. We found ourselves drawn towards the bridge that goes over the train tracks, the station itself and a nearby two-storey office building. Extreme sport types will love surfing on the trains too.

Village

Fans of *Modern Warfare 2*'s Favela level will be in heaven (in a third-world hell) here. Expect some tense battles to be fought down these chicken-infested streets, not to mention a few nasty, elevated spots on a nearby rock platform. Rushians be warned: at the event it was a camper's paradise.

Paris

The cheese-eating surrender monkeys cop it pretty bad in WWII. We can't put our finger onto why, exactly, but there's something extra classy about shooting people in the crotch with the Eiffel Tower in the background. Also features bombed-out cafes that are in various stages of 'le screwed'.

Dome

This disused radar facility is quite a challenge in its own way. It's a rather small arena compared to the others and there's a very definite feeling of being a fish in a barrel. The Domination games we tried here were frenetic, in-your-face fights that are some of the best fun to be had in *MW3*.

Plaza

This expansive indoor arena offered amazing set piece battles where being pushed back into mall-style shops made for some furious last stands. Escalators play a major role here as, with everything, holding the upper level offers a sizeable advantage.

Elite price details

Call of Duty Elite comes in two forms: free and Premium. The Premium membership is an annual subscription that costs \$64.99. For this you get a whole year's worth of DLC (monthly packs over nine months), the chance to win real world prizes and loads more. Considering that *Black Ops*' map packs are about \$22 each this is good value compared to buying all of them individually. Check out www.callofduty.com/elite/whats-included.html for the full list.

Or, you can pre-order the 'Hardened' Edition of *Modern Warfare 3*. For \$159.95 you get the game, a Premium subscription to *Elite*, multiplayer map packs, unlockables and a book with a bunch of behind-the-scenes secrets. The regular version costs \$119.95.

THE PITS

Capture the flag in Scrapyard

One of the cooler outdoor events at the show was the full 8 v 8 paintball arena. It was insanely popular, though a quick flash of our media badge let us skip through the line that wound back to east Texas somewhere.

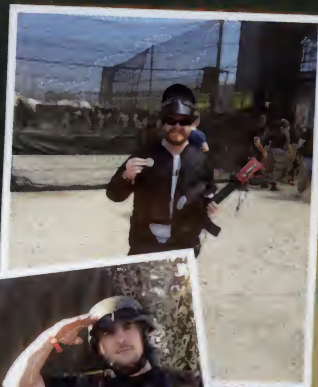
After suiting up in a black jumpsuit, tactical vest and helmet we were handed an M16 and got "spawned" into the Scrapyard. The whole place was meticulously detailed, right down to the fuselage parts and the XXC truck. Words can't describe the adrenaline.

In our seven-minute stint we provided covering fire for the winning flag capture, didn't take a single round (for a kill/death ratio of 5/0) and won man of the match (along with a special Prestige badge). We returned for a second match later in the day but got unfairly ejected for meleeing opponents and teabagging them in a victorious, purely hetero way. On the way back to the lobby we called the referee a noob and he perma-banned us for the rest of the day.

The Jeep Experience

No amount of press pass waving could move us ahead in this line. Serves us right, too. A whopping two hours later we were in what appeared to be a live infomercial for the 2012 Jeep Rubicon. Putting on a tactical vest and helmet, we boarded one of the vehicles and pretended to be interested as the marine driving extolled the virtues of the car. Yeah. Woo.

A short drive later we skidded sideways through a mock battlefield with explosions and very convincing gunfire. Turns out the person at the wheel was one of the best Hollywood stunt drivers around. Several gutchurning manoeuvres later, we regretted having signed that waiver form earlier on. A detachment of very real looking Rangers ripped us out of the car and dragged us through the bonafide breach and clearing of a nearly pitchblack building. We eventually "escaped with some Intel" in another vehicle and were glad for the change of pants waiting for us back at base camp.



The Pit

Another awesome diversion was a fully recreated paintball version of the training section in *Modern Warfare 2*, better known as The Pit. Once again, we were able to skip past about a thousand people in line and we're pretty sure half of them wanted to shoot us dead. That would have been their mistake on their part however, because it turns out we're much better at handling guns than we originally thought.

The course was a timed run with another M16 paintball gun. There were 20 targets and we only had 35 paintballs in the chamber. Disappointingly, there were no civvies to shoot. A decent time to run the course in *MW2* is about 35 seconds. According to the leaderboards on the first morning of the show, the best time was 22 seconds. We nailed it in 19 and scored another Prestige badge. As we left past the leaderboard the people in the line started chanting "hax". We shouted something back about all their mums and rage-quitted the event. We never did return to see if our record was bested.

"Another amazing benefit of the Support strike package is that your kill streak will not reset when you die"

This package offers SAM turrets to cockblock enemy aircraft, or the ability to fly a RC recon drone to spot enemy teams, or even call in a recon Juggernaut. On top of that, another amazing benefit is your kill streak will not be reset when you die. Helping your side out by securing an objective as 'team human shield' will no longer penalise you.

The final option is the Specialist strike package where your point streak rewards come in the form of perks. Right now you have a maximum of three perks. Crazy, after your eighth kill with this you get every perk unlocked. What's the downside to this god-like power? If you kick the bucket your kill streaks resets and you have to start all over again. Other drawbacks include the fact that this lone wolf type of soldier can't call in airstrikes, and there's no other tactical support from your team mates. Sledgehammer is calling it the single biggest test of skill they've ever done in a *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* game. We Look forward to trying it out.

In addition to strike packages another big

addition to the formula comes through a new addition called weapon proficiencies. These effectively let you level up your gat of choice in the same way that you yourself progress. Want reduced sway? You'll get it with stability proficiency. Recoil pissing you off? Tame that beast with kick proficiency. You can even slap extra attachments on the gun (including double scopes).

There's also a list of private match options as well where you can mix and match rules to create user-generated match modes. These will be compatible with the stat-tracking side-companion *CoD Elite* and you can effectively post up your favourite game mode like 'Teabags-a-plenty'. Once it's up online you can have your friends try out your mode, rate it, tweak it so it isn't so socially awkward and weird, and then re-share it back with you.

Speaking of match types, the biggest curve ball Sledgehammer threw at us at the event was a variation on Team Deathmatch called Kill Confirmed. Whenever you turn somebody's insides outside they'll cough up their dog tags.

Why do they hate cover?

Deathstreaks

Thought Stopping Power, Final Stand, and Martyrdom were gone? Not quite. They do return in *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*, but in the form of deathstreaks. Here's a list of them.

Juiced: 4 deaths

Move faster for a few seconds after spawning.

Revenge: 5 deaths

See position of last enemy that killed you on your mini-map.

Final Stand: 4 deaths

Unlocks at lvl 32, most likely similar to Last Stand but with a primary weapon.

Martyrdom: 4 deaths

Unlocks at lvl 51, drop a live grenade after dying.

Dead Man's Hand: 6 deaths

Unlocks at lvl 57, fall into Last Stand after dying with C4 equipped in your hand. Boom!

Hollow Points: 5 deaths

Unlocks at lvl 71, bullets cause more damage for one kill (stopping power).

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3

MATCH DETAILS

CAREER SHG Kaiser
Aug 22, 2011 7:22 PM MATCH DETAILS MAPBOARD

RESISTANCE
TEAM DEATHMATCH
Duration: 00:07:50

ALL KILLS / DEATHS **KILLS / DEATHS** **KILLS** **DEATHS**

141/141 15/7 15 7

PULLSCREEN BACK MENU

Predator's version of Google Maps

Double deagles = certain death

Send in the shield guy



CALL OF DUTY

ELITE

CAREER

CONNECT

COMPETE

IMPROVE

ELITE FEED

CAREER SUMMARY

RECENT MATCHES

CUSTOM CLASSES

rburnett

Member Since 2011-06-19

Level 30

First Sergeant III

Current XP: 194,869

Level 31

First Sergeant IV

XP Needed: 11,331

Winning Pct. 100%

Wins 1

Losses 0

Best Win Streak 1

K/D Ratio 0.71

Kills 5

Deaths 7

Headshots 0

Team Deathmatch 34 Hrs

Capture the Flag 14 Hrs

Domination 10 Hrs

Other 0 Hrs

Score 520

XP 194,869

Time Played 98 HRS

LEVEL CALCULATOR

CLASSIFIED

CLASSIFIED

CLASSIFIED

1 WEEKS

LEVEL CALCULATOR

BACK

MENU

Fragging is a viable career choice

The only way to point score is to step through the mess you've just created to scoop up those shiny IDs. This will confirm the kill and, we imagine, list that virtual soldier as MIA, forever denying their virtual families the closure they need to move on with their lives.

The same tactic works in reverse, if a buddy gets killed you can sprint over, scoop up his tags to deny the other team from scoring points. We're also assuming that there'll be a cutscene at the end of the match where you'll throw your friend's dog tags off the deck of a ship as you "let them go". Audio cue: the epic wailing guitar riff of *Top Gun*.

Anyway, we found this match type to be quite a lot of fun, as any dog tags hovering above a nasty looking stain are a goldmine for anybody with a scope. There's a new level of strategy here and we raked in the kills by luring enemies to a collection, sniping them and having two runners on standby to collect tags.

Exploring *Call of Duty Elite* a bit more we were mightily impressed with what it had to offer. There's a new Prestige shop here, which lets you choose how you want to reward yourself for prestiging, a universal player card with all of your *CoD* career stats. There's also in-game loyalty rewards for every *CoD* game you've been tirelessly playing and destroying real-life relationships for since *CoD 4*. So, yeah, all that time spent failing school while playing *WaW* and *Blops* won't be for nothing.

It's obvious that Activision has recognised that *CoD* is an insanely popular social experience where you and your mates regularly meet, greet and turn each other

into meat. They've therefore integrated with Facebook so that you can see when everybody is online, compare how crap they are to you on the leaderboard and easily invite them to yet another arse kicking. For all the Nigel No Friends out there with no Facebook stalkers, *CoD Elite* is equipped to help you find new ones. Every player can join a myriad of mini-interest groups such as; NRL fans, Lady Gaga fans, Dads Over 40 Without Reflexes or High Pitched Kids Who Insist On Being Douchebags. You name it; there'll be an interest group of like-minded players out there to connect with.

As for how our own impressions on the game, we're of two opinions. For all the talk of 'balancing', a few tweaks and the trumpeting of "still having 60-frames per second" (a barb aimed squarely at rising opponent *Battlefield 3*), *Modern Warfare 3* didn't feel like the freshest experience. There's obviously a very good reason for that, though, every new tweak made to the formula has the potential to unbalance something else and it'll send a ripple of anger through the millions of people who preferred it the "old way".

We were also confounded by the absence of a lot of the mechanics and systems that worked well in *Black Ops*. In particular the dive roll move, Contracts and Wager Matches. They were all great additions to the franchise and they're being arbitrarily left out because Activision is determined to maintain an 'us' and 'them' segregation between Infinity Ward and Treyarch. Not incorporating and improving on what worked well for your sister team is an




* Insert Team America theme here *



Geneva these conventions

odd decision that feels like a step backward. It certainly doesn't strike us as the best way to stave off franchise fatigue.

That said, at the moment we're only in possession of half of the facts with *Modern Warfare 3*. What we did get to go hands on with felt much, much better than just a glorified map pack. It's certainly good enough to justify the millions of people who will auto-buy it and spend hundreds of hours happily digesting it. This is essentially feels like a spiritual combination of *Modern Warfare's* gameplay style, the smoothness of *Modern Warfare 2* and a bunch of worthy switch-ups. We're not expecting cutting edge innovation here, rather another taste of the rock-solid, superbly tuned experience that makes this series number one. Stay tuned for our final judgements in the coming months. 

Two Masterpieces. One Unforgettable Experience.

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&

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OF THE
COLOSSUS™

9/10 Official PlayStation 2
Magazine – Australia

9/10 Official PlayStation 2
Magazine – Australia

Two of the most revered PlayStation 2 adventures ever made are about to be reborn with the power of PlayStation 3. Fully remastered in HD and enhanced in stereoscopic 3D, prepare to relive the awe and the wonder of two critically-acclaimed legends on one Blu-ray Disc.

M

Moderate
violence


3D
Compatible
Game



PS3
PlayStation 3



SONY
make.believe

A character in a military-style uniform, including a wide-brimmed hat and a tactical vest, is shown in profile, looking down at a laptop. The character is wearing black gloves and has a serious expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

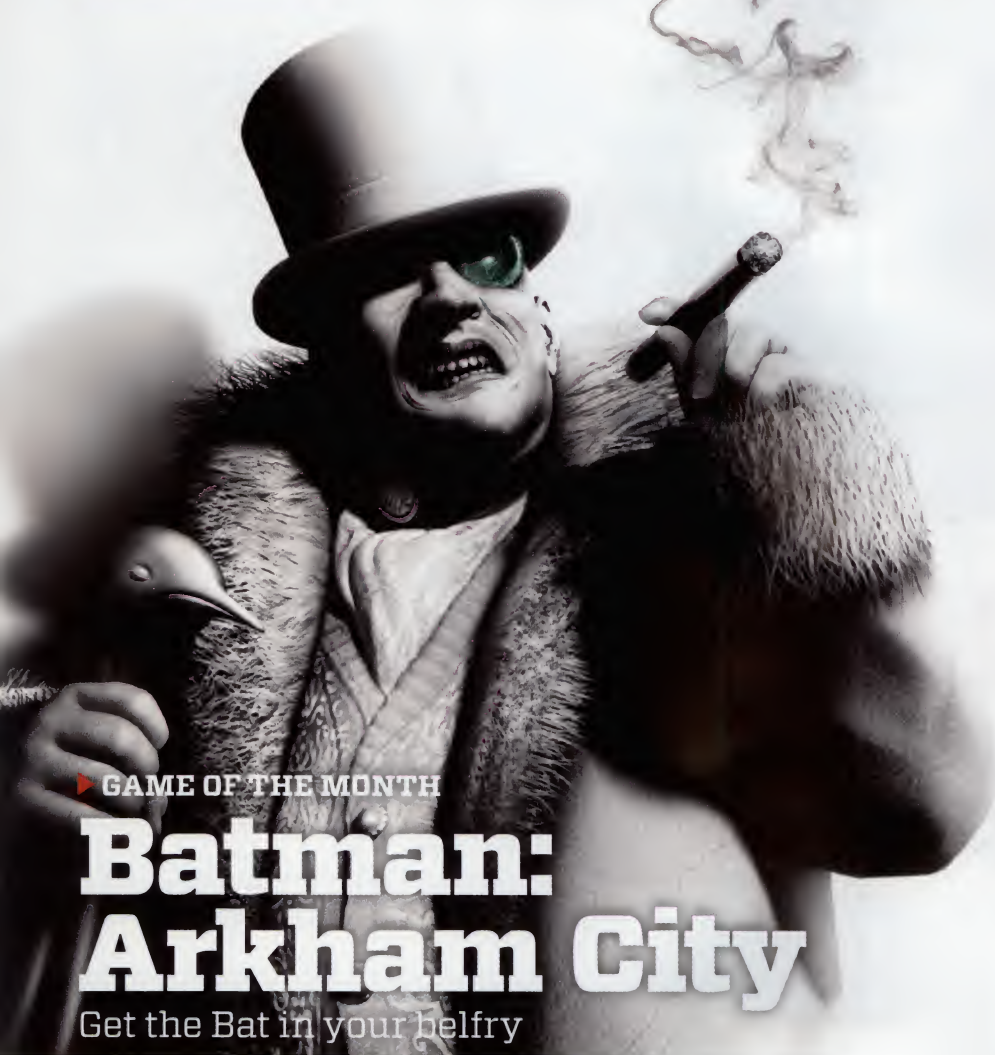
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in review



► GAME OF THE MONTH

Batman: Arkham City

Get the Bat in your helfry

Review ratings

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. *OPS* has handed out this score only once.

This Month

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79 Galaga Legions DX

80 ICO and Shadow of the Colossus Collection

81 Street Fighter III: Third Strike – Online Edition

81 Splinter Cell Trilogy HD

82 F1 2011

82 God of War Collection Vol. II

82 Child of Eden

82 Rugby World Cup 2011



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.



Batman: Arkham City

He's the hero Gotham deserves, and this is the game he deserves

Welcome to Arkham City. The so-called super prison: a sprawling expanse of urban misery walled off from the rest of Gotham and populated with its putrid human refuse.

Crooks, gangsters, thugs, murderers, and psychopaths of every type and stripe roam the streets of this abysmal hellhole, and while they are nominally supervised and policed by (the appropriately named) Hugo Strange and his small army of private security contractors, the reality is that anarchy reigns. Inmates are free to roam the streets, doing whatever they like to whoever they like whenever they like. The only thing they are not allowed to do is leave. There's no getting out of Arkham City. There are no day-leave passes or parole hearings, no conjugal visits or trips out to the highway to pick up trash with a pointy stick. Once you're in, you're locked in here for good.

Even if you're Batman. Lured into the prison-city via means nefarious, the caped crusader finds himself in the unenviable position of being a lone vigilante in a vast community of criminals, many of whom were incarcerated because of him. Of course, this was essentially the same setup as in *Arkham Asylum* – the difference is that *Arkham City* is a much bigger place with a lot more criminals, and not just the regular kind either. Super criminals like Two-Face, The Joker, and The Penguin vie for power and influence within these razor-

wired walls, squabbling endlessly over turf and supplies, each with their own territory of armed thugs. All things considered, Arkham City is just about the worst place in the world for Batman to be, and that of course is exactly why he's there.

But it's not all bad. As a kind of concentrated microcosm of Gotham proper, Arkham City is Batman's natural habitat. With finely honed athletic prowess and an improbably versatile collection of gadgets, he stalks the rooftops and alleyways with a confident ease born of perpetual practice. Or at least that's what he does once you've mastered his myriad

abilities and the game's (necessarily) tricky controls. If you're a newcomer to the *Arkham* universe or simply haven't played the first game in a while, your first hour or so in *Arkham City* will probably be spent making clumsy mistakes and comic pratfalls as you come to grips with which buttons do what and when. Whoops! You fell off the roof. Whoops! You landed on some guy's head. Whoops! Him and all his friends beat Batters to death.

Happily mishaps like these are seldom a source of frustration. Developer Rocksteady has carefully constructed each

Play this if you like

Batman: Arkham Asylum, *Batman* in general, fun in general

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

RELEASE: OCTOBER 19

DISTRIBUTOR:

WARNER BROS.

DEVELOPER:

ROCKSTEADY

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$99.95



Piff!

"...it makes you feel like
the superhero you're
supposed to be"

of the game's early missions to teach you the basics of being Batman, and a little bit of failure is an acceptable consequence of that learning experience. For example, soon after your arrival in Arkham City, you'll be given access to augmented reality challenges that test your skill with Batman's glide and grapple hook. Together these are your fundamental means of transport and so it's to the game's credit that it takes such pains to educate you in their use.

Eventually (or ideally) your skills will be such that you can traverse the entirety of Arkham City without ever once touching

the ground, a fleeting shadow in the moonlit sky, swooping down on thugs to deliver swift and brutal justice. WHOOSH. THUNK. Nighty night, scumbag. This is what it means to be Batman and it is the crux of *Arkham City*'s brilliance. More than any other superhero game – more than *Arkham Asylum*, more than *Spider-Man 2*, more than *Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* – it makes you feel like the superhero you're supposed to be.

Combat is an obvious case in point. Not being the gentlemanly sort, Batman's enemies will typically attack en masse, and with whatever weapons they have:

fists, pipes, knives, guns, or anything else that happens to be lying around. As you'd expect, timing is the key to victory. Batman isn't the type of guy who goes into a fight swinging – he's a methodical, precise, and highly-trained takedown machine. What that means in practical terms is that you have to develop a sense of rhythm and learn how to time your own attacks and counter your opponent's so that eventually fights become a kind brutal ballet in which the Dark Knight sweeps from foe to foe, gracefully dodging blows and delivering them in turn until everyone but him is left writhing on the ground.

If this sounds familiar it's because the fundamental mechanics of

I'm the goddamn Batman

Arkham City's Batman is a ruthless sort and not above extracting information from crims by beating them senseless. He still won't kill, but.



Massage!



Swoop!

Ice to meet you

Mr Freeze is a tragic figure. Driven by a desire to revive his cryonically frozen wife, he strives to find a cure for her disease, whatever the cost.

combat in *Arkham City* are more or less identical to those in *Arkham Asylum*, such that players familiar with the first game should be able to get scrapping straight away without any real difficulty. Individual elements like instant takedowns and the timing of critical attacks have been refined to make it easier to rack up massive combos, and while the hardcore may balk at that, the truth is that it suits the expanded scope of *Arkham City* perfectly. Brawls are bigger here: where in the first game you'd rarely see more than five or six goons on screen at once, here you'll often be confronted with 10 – 15 hostiles at a time, many of whom possess unique defences that have to be accounted for and overcome. As the game progresses and enemies become tougher and

better armed, you'll need to constantly think on your feet and react with machine-like efficiency.

Again, this is what it means to be Batman.

Gadgets also make a welcome return from *Arkham Asylum*, and play a crucial role in navigating the city, taking down enemies, and solving the game's myriad puzzles. More so than the first game, *Arkham City* challenges you to use your gadgets and tools in creative and often unexpected ways, engendering a supremely satisfying sense of accomplishment whenever you successfully overcome a particularly taxing conundrum. For instance, the remote Batarang returns, but — in addition to being accessible from the get-go — is now much more versatile, and can be combined with other gadgets and elements in the environment to achieve some pretty spectacular results.

We know that sounds vague, but the truth is that if we were to be any more specific than that we'd be spoiling one of the chief joys of playing *Arkham City* — the joy of discovery. The number of things there are to see and do in this expansive rain-soaked cesspool is simply staggering. In addition to the main story missions, which should take even the most skilled players at least 25 hours to complete, villain-specific side missions and one-off challenges (such as the aforementioned AR challenges) are abundant and make for absorbing distractions. Riddler challenges are back, but this time they are more numerous, and much more complex. Getting your hands on those little green trophies isn't just a matter of finding them in vents anymore: if you want them, you're going to have to work for them by solving a diversity of deviously clever puzzles.

Heads or heads?

Two-Face embodies duality, using a double headed dollar (one side scarred) to decide his victims' fate.



One thing we found particularly remarkable about the Riddler challenges in *Arkham City* is that Rocksteady have somehow found a way to provide Batman with plausible motivation for solving them. In the first game you sort of just did them because... well, it was a game, and that's the sort of thing you do in games. But here there is actually a compelling narrative reason to pursue the Riddler's tasks, imbuing with an extra layer of significance that makes that much more satisfying to solve.

This extra layer of depth extends not only to Riddler challenges, but to ▶

Laugh till you die

Once again voiced by Mark Hamill, The Joker in *Arkham City* is a much more clownlike interpretation of the character than Heath Ledger's ruthless, nihilistic psychopath.



Anatomy of a brawl

Fights in *Arkham City* are frenetic brawls in which the clever player is encouraged to use all the tools and abilities and Batman's (and Catwoman's) disposal. Here's a breakdown of a single fracas.



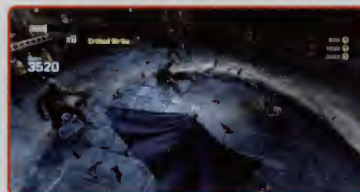
As in *Arkham Asylum*, countering is absolutely essential in *AC*. The yellow counter indicator indicates this guy's armed with a knife, so you have to be extra careful!



It's always a good idea to make use of Detective Vision to get a quick overview of what you're up against. The yellow bits here indicate weapons and body armour.



Taking down goons decked out with body armour requires bit of effort. First you have to stun them with your cape, and then deliver a series of crushing body blows, like so.



Time your attacks to build your combo count and you can perform special attacks like this one, in which Batman releases a cloud of bats to confuse and disorient foes.



Take down the last thug standing and you'll be treated to a slow-mo close up of their brutal beatdown. This poor sod's about to receive a boot to the face. That's what you get for getting into a fight with Batman, doofus!



Stealth is crucial to success in *Arkham City*, particularly when it comes to thugs with guns. Stick to the shadows and sneak up behind them for the silent takedown.


 A large, dark, atmospheric image showing Batman in his suit, crouching over a large, grey, sack-like object. In the background, another figure lies on the ground. The scene is dimly lit, emphasizing the gritty and dark tone of the game.

"Grapple!"


"Batman: Arkham City is not only the best superhero game ever made, it's one of the best games ever made"

Arkham City as a whole. Take the villains, for example. In the original game, villains were very much one-dimensional and defined entirely by their most obvious character traits. But in *Arkham City*, they possess a depth and nuance that you honestly wouldn't expect from a superhero game. They seem more human, more believable, more like people and less like cartoons. This is partly because the narrative and dialogue are more sophisticated, but also because every single one of the voice actors does a sterling job with the lines they've been given. Mark Hamill is predictably fantastic as The Joker, but to our reckoning the real stars are the lesser villains — Danny Jacobs' chilling performance as the deranged serial-killer Victor Zsasz is almost Oscar worthy, as is Nolan 'Nathan Drake' North's cockney Penguin. (Seriously. It shouldn't work, but it totally does.)

Just so there's no confusion, let's state it plain: *Batman: Arkham City* is not only the best superhero game ever made, it's one of the best

games ever made full-stop. It takes the already superlative original and gloriously expands on it. It's a deeper game, more complex, more inventive, more mature. In our view it brings the caped crusader's world to life better than any comic, movie, or television show before it. *The Dark Knight Rises*? Christopher Nolan should take note that he's already risen — right here in *Arkham City*.

To say it one last time: this is what it means to be Batman. And when it comes down to it, who the hell doesn't want to be Batman?

 **Dan Staines**

Meow meow

As you no doubt already know, Catwoman features as a playable character in *Arkham City*, starring in her own little interludes during the main story. Equipped with her trademark whip as well as caltrops and bolas, she's a supremely agile fighter, quicker and more acrobatic than Batman, but much less resilient to damage. Using her whip, claws, and considerable gymnastic skill, she swings and climbs across the rooftops, skulking in the shadows like her namesake until she's ready to pounce. All in all she's an exhilarating character to play, and we'd be thrilled to see her get her own game.

Final Say

PRESENTATION Endlessly creative, perfectly moody, and technically flawless. This is Epic's Unreal Engine pushed to its absolute limit.

SOUND Alternately foreboding and frantic, the game's orchestral soundtrack matches the enhances the on-screen action perfectly. Voice acting is brilliant.

CONTROLS Complex and initially overwhelming but also logical and responsive. It'll take a while to get used to them, but once you do it feels perfectly natural flinging Batman around.

REPLAY VALUE Immense. A massive main quest, dozens of side missions, Riddler challenges, secondary game modes, and DLC will keep most people occupied for months.

Verdict

We can't imagine how a superhero game could be better than this. Absolutely sublime.

10

Write in, score prizes! **Competition**

WIN!
A PLAYSTATION 3
AND THREE
NEW GAMES!
DETAILS BELOW

Got a problem? Get it sworded!

WIN! A PlayStation 3 and three new games!

To celebrate the release of the medieval action title *The Cursed Crusade*, our friends at AFA are giving you the chance to win a brand new 160GB PS3, a copy of *The Cursed Crusade* as well as the latest rally sim *WRC 2* and high-octane *Crash Time 4!*

Set in the 12th Century, *The Cursed Crusade* pits you as Denz, a cursed Templar. He's fighting alongside a mercenary named Esteban, and the two of them have to work together if they're going to save their souls. With two-player split screen co-op, a dearth of deadly weapons and enemies that are just waiting to tear your limbs off, this dark fantasy is sure to be full of epic adventures set against a historical background.

To be in the running to win this awesome prize, answer this question in 25 words or less and follow our entry instructions:

**What do you expect to find on
your cursed crusade?**

THE CURSED CRUSADE™

How to Enter

To enter Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia competitions email your entries to ops@citrusmedia.com.au with 'Get it Sworded!' in the subject line. Only one email entry is allowed – multiple entries will be deleted. Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **Get it Sworded, OPS Competitions, PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002**. Only one entry per household will be allowed. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competition closes 13/12/2011. Winners will be notified by mail.



Check out www.thecursedcrusade.com.au for more info on this upcoming game!



Resistance 3

Ending things with an almighty... ka-pop

Play this if you like

Half-Life 2, closure

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER:

INSOMNIAC GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$99.95

If imitation is the sincerest form of a compliment, then *Resistance 3* taps *Half-Life 2* on the shoulder and asks how its butt looks so trim in those pants, even though the sun shines out of it.

The similarities become uncanny quickly. You're constantly trudging through mutant infested quasi-City 17 environments. You'll cleanse an accursed village with the help of a shotgun-toting, scripture-spewing preacher, not unlike Father Grigori. Later, there's a Combine – sorry, Chimera – dropship attack involving a not-quite-heat-seeking rocket launcher. Lastly, you must ruin the alien's inter-dimensional portal by playing Jenga

with their sky-raping tower of power.

Honestly, we kept waiting for a mysterious government suit to show up and hand us a "pry bar", and a gun called the "Newton's Law Bender Mk2".

Resistance 3 wears its influences as subtly as rainbow suspenders, and if you're going to lift ideas from the past, you may as well look to the best and make it a first-class heist. At the end of the day, the repurposing of Valve's greatest hits, meshed with Insomniac's cache of great ideas, makes this concluding chapter an entertaining old school / new school hybrid.

Take the health and weapon systems for example. As Joe Capelli, a family

man hiding out in a world that is all but enslaved, you must scavenge for everything to survive. First, you must rely on health kits, unlike the self-regenerative super-soldier of the previous two titles, Nathan Hale. Secondly, ammunition is scarcer, which means you'll not only keep every single weapon you scoop up, but continually upgrade them with whatever materials you can seagull.

Both of these changes to the formula upset modern shooter traditions in a welcome way. A finite supply of life makes every engagement that much more desperate. The abandonment of the "two weapon rule" makes zero sense in terms of being encumbered; but having easy access to 12 different guns is nothing but pure, old-fashioned fun. Likewise, the 'magical' and automatic three-tiered upgrading of each of your guns due to nothing more than repetitive use, mocks logic to its very core. But there's simply no hating on a shotgun that suddenly decides to evolve and belch napalm.

Knowing your guns is a requirement, unless you want your one-man resistance to be futile. As you make your caravan of courage across the American wasteland you're beset on all sides by feral Chimera and scum-of-the-earth human scavengers. The former want to eviscerate pretty much everything, including the challenging new pure-breed Chimera. Whereas the low-life humans attack you en masse in a train sequence that rivals *Uncharted 2*'s.

There are some memorable set-piece moments here, but disappointingly there's nothing that approaches the epic scale we saw in *Resistance 2*. Insomniac forgoes such spectacle to move us away from the gung-ho military battles and into intimate, "human cost" scenes that tug on the heartstrings like *Homefront* did. But while these interludes can negatively affect the pacing it's hard not to be impressed



Shotgun vs. space death ray: the winner may surprise you

"A finite supply of life makes every engagement **that much more desperate**"



The alien equivalent of **stomping on sand castles**

with how sumptuously lit and insanely detailed these safe havens are. Combine those moments with impressive, weather lashed exteriors, and *Resistance 3* earns itself a seat at the great first-party visual feast.

Unfortunately, it's soon downgraded to a place at the kids table of that feast, because the AI can't sell the experience at times. The patterns of your foes, particularly the new long-legged jumping types, appear jarringly canned, and thus easily predicted and exploited. Enemies also seem to be at a loss during the frequent 'ride on a vessel' sections. The ones who don't want to board your ride will often stand there like idiots as the whole thing devolves into a drive-by turkey shoot. The buggers that do hitch a ride will often clog together at their single pre-scripted landing point in unnatural, unmoving clusters. Ordinarily, this would be a minor concern, but *Insomniac* throws a lot of these sorts of levels in, and these breaks in immersion are compounded because of it.

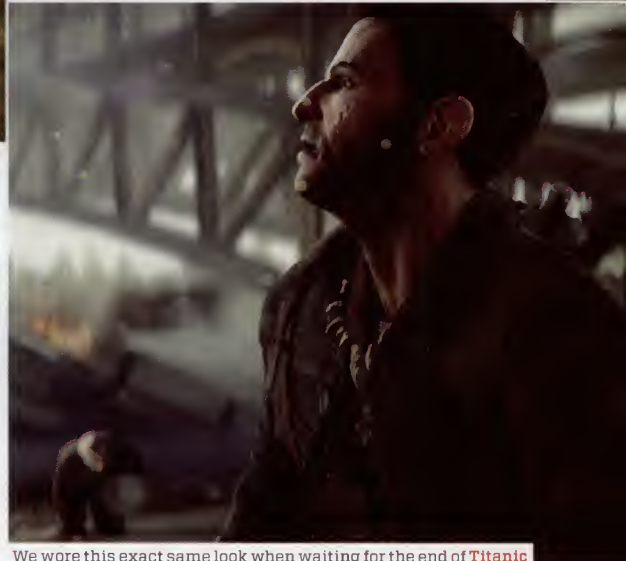
The AI may lack some guile, but those hungry for a challenge can find plenty by tackling the unlockable Super Soldier difficulty with a mate in two-player co-op, or there's a

superlative adversarial multiplayer mode, too. 'Tighter and heavily borrowed' is the best way to describe the online shenanigans. Player count has been chopped right back from 60 to 16, and while we think a reduction was needed, 32 would have been a healthier number. Regardless, the change translates into better designed arenas, more cohesive teamwork and closer fought engagements that feel worlds apart from the last game. With a cache of unlockable abilities ripped right out of *Black Ops* and satisfyingly brutal weapons to unlock, this multiplayer is well worth the price of its online pass admission.

When the dust settles and the credits have rolled, *Resistance 3* stands as a very solid shooter, even though it is a slightly disappointing conclusion to the series. In particular, the tonal shift from all-conquering super-soldier to 'desperate family man with a plan' is generally well done, but it won't be what many fans of the series will be expecting. *Resistance 3*'s single-player may be at a slightly lower point in the franchise, the multiplayer offerings have never been this much fun. Either way, this is an apocalypse trip that every sci-fi fan ought to saddle up for. **Adam Mathew**



A kick in the potatoes would work just as well, **if you can find them**



We wore this exact same look when waiting for the end of *Titanic*

The write stuff

Insomniac's Jon Paquette recently came to Australia and talked to us about the writing process behind *Resistance 3*, Alice Springs, and how they're using up everyone's Post-it notes.

OPS: Was it by design that you put Alice Springs into a multiplayer map, or did you stumble on doing that?

Jon Paquette: It was more by design, in the sense that we knew the main story was happening in America and we all felt like we were neglecting the rest of the world – we knew we had to represent what's going on around the globe. In *Resistance*, the story isn't just about what's happening in America, it's happening everywhere. We know that PlayStation owners are a global audience as well, so people want to know that this story isn't just about America. We looked at the globe and said, "These are kind of the places that we think we should have."

OPS: Take us through the writing process for *Resistance 3*.

JP: Early on we made a few big decisions. One, we wanted to follow Joe Capelli. Two, we wanted to focus on humanity and regular people and not the military. And three, we wanted to have this kind of road journey. We have this room at *Insomniac* that was dedicated to *Resistance 3*, and we took over one whole wall and put up a bunch of Post-its and we

said this is the event that we want to have happen here in one colour Post-it, and then in another colour Post-it – we had what we wanted the player to feel during particular section of the game. So it's like, this is what happens, and this is the emotion that we want the player to have... Having that other column, where we put the emotions that we want the player to experience, I think that's a key part of that and that was new for *Resistance 3*, for me.

OPS: Is there anything you'd want to change in the Alice Springs map now that you've been here?

JP: I think nature is a bigger part of this area than you can get from Google Maps or Google Images. Just being here and seeing the sunrise and the sunset, smelling the air and kind of being in this beautiful place is different. I would try to represent nature a little bit more than what is in there now, which is a regular suburban town – which is great for fighting, it's great for a multiplayer map because you get buildings. But, as far as how to properly represent Alice Springs, I think nature should be a bigger part of that.

Final Say

PRESENTATION Urban decay laced with mutants has never looked this brutally beautiful. It's spoiled by fairly frequent AI hiccups.

SOUND Very decent voice acting and meaty sounding melee thunks and weapon discharges. Music is capable if forgettable.

CONTROLS The time-freezing weapon wheel is back and co-exists well with the quick-swap button. Capelli's movements look and feel remarkably kinetic.

REPLAY VALUE The multiplayer is the strongest feature here. Though the player count has been reduced, this is extremely well balanced and engaging.

Verdict

A derivative but **effortlessly compelling finale.**

8

"Well I've got the timer right but this damned tripod just won't stay up"



Dead Island

Who wants to unlive forever?



Dear whoever stood in front of a panel of suits and successfully argued that this game only has MA15+ levels of violence, and thus shouldn't be banned. Thank you. Please be our future lawyer in all things. Because what we have right here is a veritable goregasm of violence, an 'all-you-can-beat' goregasm of zombie dismemberment. And we're so glad it is available to us.

Don't let the name Techland – or our scathing review of their last game, *Call of Juarez: The Cartel* – put you off. *Dead Island* is a killer title in all the ways that count. It's basically *Fallout 3* meets *Dead Rising 2*; an open world, first-person brawler that has RPG elements. That's not to say there isn't any gunplay. There's tonnes. Assault rifles, along with the ability to drive about in the jungle like *Far Cry 2*, are abilities that do show up, it just takes half the game to appear. In the meantime you'll be happy to know that stoving in heads is actually more entertaining.

Using a dynamic crosshair that intelligently paints itself across your assailant's body, you can slice and dice like a surgeon. Targeted limbs may be broken by well timed thwacks, the same appendage can be pruned off in a glorious arterial spurt with an edged weapon. You even have the option to hurl an object into an enemy, close the distance, yank it out of your still-mobile victim and continue to lay into them. Like *Dead Rising* the



Happy Hour at the bar's starting to heat up

environment is littered with objects to use. But though their effectiveness degrades and they "break", they don't "disappear" forever. It's a much better system, and we kept repairing our very first baseball bat for the entire game. We got so attached to it, we wound up naming it.

But we're sentimental. *Dead Island* is actually a lot like *Borderlands* in the sense that you're constantly stat checking better weapons. Once you do find that dream fire axe with the awesome base damage, you can then spend money on it at a work bench. Some of these are simple upgrades for its stats, but you can also combine your

weapon with stuff (like pipecleaners and cellophane) to build an uber version of that weapon. Every day is arts and crafts day in *Dead Island*, whether it's making sticky bombs, electrified machetes or simply upgrading Betty the bat with some nails or a buzzsaw blade.

The residents of *Dead Island* may have learned a few lessons from Chuck Greene and his bush mechanic weapon system, but they actually outpace him in some areas. Techland never tries to turn your situation into a comedy skit by offering overly-wacky situations and weapon combinations. It's much more dedicated to a sense of

Play this if you like

Borderlands, Fallout 3, Dead Rising 2

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

RELEASE: OUT NOW

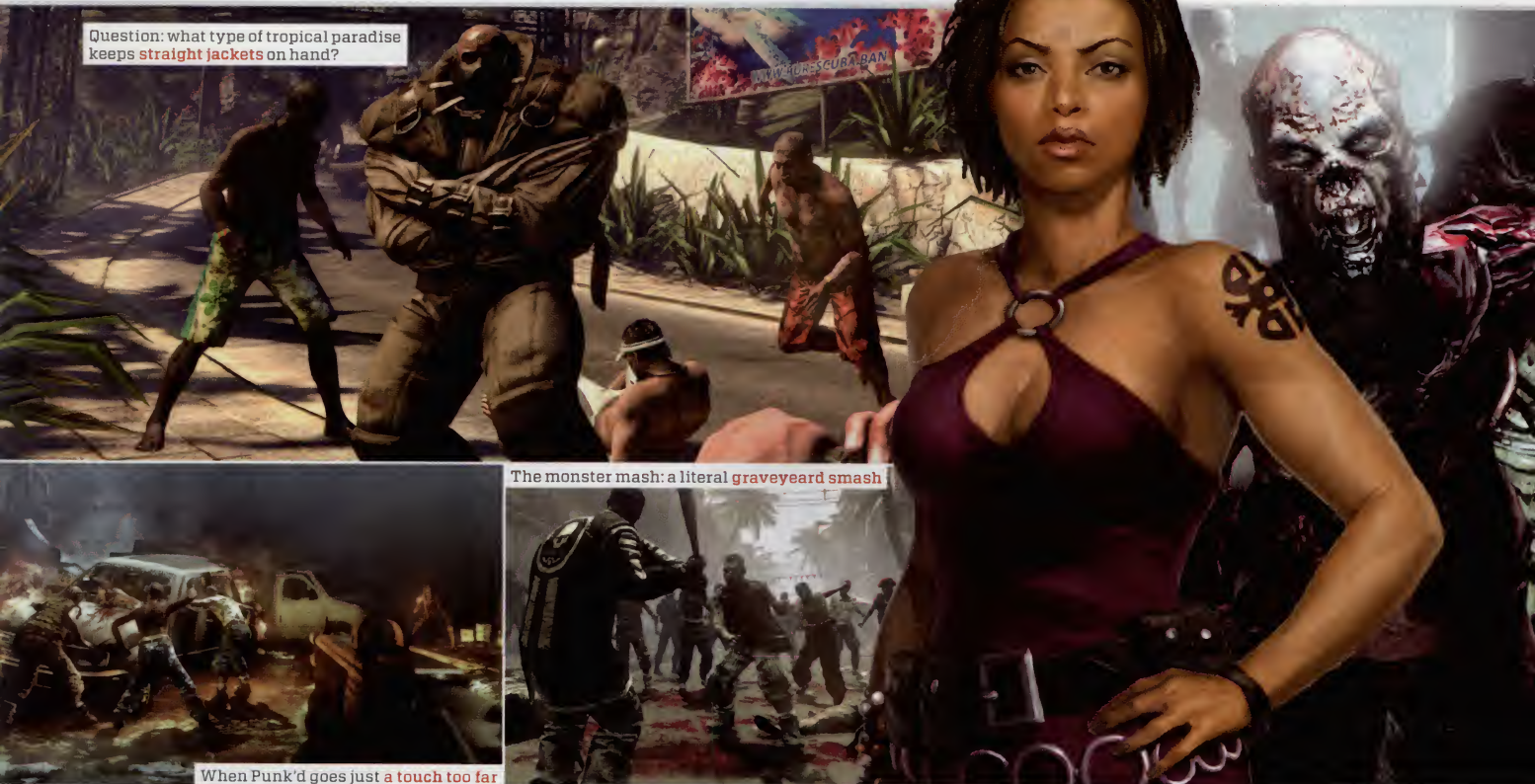
DISTRIBUTOR: QVS

DEVELOPER: TECHLAND

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$109.95

Question: what type of tropical paradise keeps **straight jackets** on hand?



The monster mash: a literal **graveyard smash**

When Punk'd goes just a **touch too far**

"I'll paper-scissors-rock you for **the last piece of toilet paper**"

You've got **red** on you

pants-wetting horror. There are many moments when you move out of the tropical sun and into some very dark and genuinely unsettling environments. It certainly doesn't help that your rechargeable torch only lasts a minute at a time.

How you should approach these situations depends greatly on which of the four survivors you select at the start. The four hero classes are the Tank (Sam the rapper who loves blunt weapons), Assassin (Xian the blade obsessed resort receptionist), Jack-of-All-Trades (Logan the ex-NFL star who throws things like a champ), and Support (Purna the gun specialist and ex-Sydney cop). Each class comes with a unique skill tree in which you spend points earned as you level up and these also provide bonuses to certain abilities or unlock new combos or finishing moves.

Thanks to a massive amount of quests to trigger, a huge playground to explore and an astonishing amount of variation in the zombie character models, *Dead Island* is surprisingly addictive. Looting and grinding is quite absorbing on your lonesome, but with three like-minded buddies it's the most endearing co-op experiences since *Borderlands*. The enemies scale as you become more powerful, which means the newcomers will be facing shamblers, while the level 50s will be dodging sprinter zombies, exploders and worse. Death, even in singleplayer, is a five second respawning inconvenience more than anything. But you'll still want to avoid it as there's a chance of losing 20 per cent of your precious coin. Damn you, you thievin' undead mongrels.

Dead Island blind-sided us by how much fun it is, but griefers will still have plenty to whinge about with it. For example, this is a "handsome" game that nobody would mistakenly call beautiful, and the voice acting is bloody horrendous. It got so bad that we drew a crowd in the office every time a cutscene happened, just so everybody could take the piss out of one recurring accent in the game. We eventually identified it as "Ausfaillian". Likewise the script is ham sandwich stuff that not even Uwe Boll's greatest fans would digest.

Be that as it may, we can't stress how much fun we had playing this slightly ugmo production. The gameplay stutters slightly in minor ways, and the visuals in major ways; but we still found this to be irresistible to put down. If you're the type of level-headed gamer who values fun over graphics, or you and some mates are looking for a great co-op game, then we'd say the bludgeontastic *Dead Island* is a bash well worth your cash. We're deadly serious.

Adam Mathew

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Serviceable-to-flawed graphics. Graphics whores need not apply at all.

SOUND The sound effects and zombie moans are top notch, the voice acting is painful

CONTROLS First-person melee fighting has never been this fun and satisfying.

REPLAY VALUE Addictive in solo or in online co-op. We haven't had this much fun since *Borderlands*.

Verdict

Flawed, but still a game destined to be a word-of-mouth cult hit. Check it out.

8



FIFA 12

This year's winning eleven?

**Play this
if you like**

FIFA 11

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SPORT

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA

PLAYERS: 1-22

RRP: \$109.95

"Sometimes a game comes along that you know you should win, know you must win," harps new FIFA 12 commentator Alan Smith as we start an Exhibition match as Chelsea against the Perth Glory. "Anything else," Smith continues, "will be a big disappointment."

That's true. And what bigger game is there than FIFA 12? Since FIFA 09 revamped the franchise, the series has come to define what a sports update should be. We've seen updated seasonal content, new ways to interact with the community and, above all, fresh ideas that tighten how each iteration plays.

FIFA 12 features all three. But without a doubt, it's what they've done with the latter—the gameplay—that has left us the most intrigued.

Before we get onto that, we'd just like to say God bless David Rutter and EA Canada. He and his team have been fighting a war, a campaign, against what some might term "assy play" — shorthand methods of victory that lack both skill and grace, often the weapon of choice for horrible younger siblings. On their quest the team have managed to snuff out the spamming of through balls and brainless passing. Their aim has clearly been to keep FIFA in the tension between skill and thrill.

This time in FIFA 12 they've set out to eradicate mindless defending and removed the ability to blindly tackle by holding down a couple of buttons. Forget saving whales and protecting baby seals from clubbers, any FIFA player worth his laces knows this is a noble and righteous pursuit.

EA's solution is a new system called Tactical Defending and, without a doubt, it's the biggest departure the series has received in years. Players still have the jockey buttons at their disposal, but ⊗ is now used to Contain an opponent. It's similar in purpose to the Jockey function in that it's used to zone or slow down the opposing ball carrier, but it will also

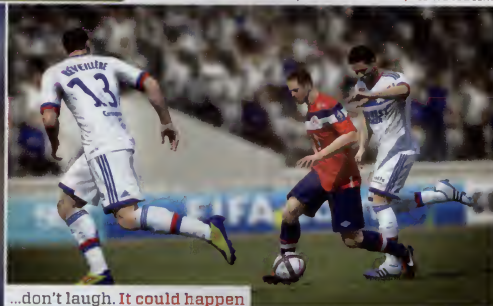

EA's new fitness title, **FIFA Zumba**, in action...

automatically tackle if the ball is in reach (rare as this is). Working with it is the new tackle button. Again, this isn't a 'hold it and win' deal. Instead, pressing tackle causes each defender to lunge at the ball. If they time it correctly, they'll pull off a tackle and take possession. If they don't, the ball carrier can burn right past 'em. On paper it sounds brilliant.

Yet after playing through countless matches we're not convinced it improves the *FIFA* experience. Simply put, defending against *FIFA 12*'s new turn-on-a-dime Precision Dribbling makes this new defensive approach seem awkward, and often provides a one-way trip to see your own net bulge. While we certainly became better at discerning when to back off and when to aggressively tackle after hours of play, we still conceded "assy goal" after "assy goal" as opponents jinked and sidestepped around our half, pumping goals themselves or threading killer through balls. It was incredibly hard to shut opponents down, and time and again we'd struggle for possession for an age before excruciatingly conceding a goal. It feels as though the balance is off a little, with possession too easy to maintain.

As defending is such an intrinsic part of the game, this put a slight dampener on the rest of the update's superlative improvements and additions. For one, all the little annoyances from *FIFA 11* have been ironed out. Throw ins and chested balls are in less jeopardy of being stolen, speedy strikers now outrun slower defenders, and the loading has been cut when bringing on a substitute.

There's new stuff you can do on the ball, too. The aforementioned Precision Dribbling, another of the game's prime new features, allows players to cut past defenders from a standing start. There's a new high risk, high reward Flair Shot that activates diving headers, bicycle kicks, and long range net busters. A finesse pass for gamers keen to emulate the magical touches of players like Messi and Iniesta, and our personal favourite, the bouncing lob pass, which can punt flat dipping balls to players across the field. Players can even switch to



...don't laugh. It could happen

the keeper when defending to stop a shot.

When you've got all that down your gob you can indulge in the new game modes. While EA has streamlined the bloated menu and binned favourites like Lounge Mode, online players can now play 10-game truncated seasons against friends, and the Head-to-Head Seasons mode allows players to move up and down through various ranked divisions. Pro Clubs, on the other hand, lets players who are into their 11-on-11 play find a team online and become a real 11-man squad ready for mad Mondays and loose groupies. Finally, Ultimate Team is no longer a DLC add-on. It's waiting for players as soon as they jump online. All that and we haven't even mentioned EA Sports Football Club: the service that allows players to use *FIFA* to demonstrate their commitment to their favourite club.

Yes, there's a lot of great stuff. Regardless, what really matters is not so much the various wrappers that the football comes in, but the quality of the play itself. While *FIFA 12* is certainly solid, there's a big part of us that prefers *FIFA 11*. The tackling might have been brainless, but compared with the almost-there Tactical Defence it's almost the better devil. Last year's game might not have required the extra skill, but it was less frustrating. While *FIFA 12* has fixed a lot of annoying bugs and introduced some great new features, at our next football gathering we'll still be kicking around with last year's champion. **James Ellis**

Career Man

EA aren't one to yield a square metre of territory to their opposition so they've replied to the constant mantra that *Pro Evolution's* Master League mode is superior to their Career mode with a chunky list of improvements. From improvements to player transfers, contracts, budgets, injuries, and even the ability to affect your team by what you say to the press, it's a far more comprehensive mode for those who love to play from the top down. There's even a new Youth Academy that makes scouting players from around the world more lucrative and straightforward.



This guy is putting his hand in the air like he just don't care



Center holds it! Holds it!! Holds it!!!



Final Say

PRESENTATION Grease us in oil: this is slick. Nothing major over last year in terms of visuals, but the bulky menus have been cut.

SOUND Music chosen by people with better taste in tunes than any of us, plus rich and interesting commentary.

CONTROLS Tactical defending is a huge change and often left us howling at the ceiling. Some genuinely cool new features, like precision dribbling and flair shots, add welcome pomp.

REPLAY VALUE There will be gamers out there that will only ever own this game and will never tire of it.

Verdict

FIFA 12 is brilliant, but as a follow up to 11 and 10 it will split opinions; if online play is your thing it's definitely worth it. Offline? Stick with *FIFA 11*.

8

An extreme version of **Piggy in the Middle**


The Orks' entrance was good,
Captain Titus' was better

Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine

Not quite how things Ork to be



These savvy cats take the catwalk

Play this
if you like

All things Warhammer

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: RELIC

PLAYERS: 1-16 PLAYERS

RRP: \$99.95

Space Marine's biggest positive and worst negative is that it is rigidly true to the canon feel of the Warhammer 40,000 tabletop game. On the one hand, you have these awesomely detailed, figurine-looking characters to control and go 'pew pew' with. The wargasmic battles between the behemoth marines and their chav enemies, the Orks, translates like the stuff of gory glory.

But just like a bout of the tabletop version, the story propping up *Space Marine* is a forgettable, half-arsed improvisation. Also, the in-game environments really do feel like the digital equivalent of someone's bedroom carpet. Welcome to the poo brown 'planet' of Boredia.

Fortunately, the combat fares much better than the setup. *Space Marine* may look like your average third-person shooter on the surface, but it's geared more towards melee assaults where you're carving enemies up with chainswords, or sinking a Poweraxe into their stupid Orken heads. Sure, the projectile weapons are meaty and many, but thanks to shallow

magazines and the overwhelming surge of charging foes, your close quarters dance card is always made full.

Bashing heads is also heavily tied into the health system. There's slowly regenerating power armour, but it's frequently sputtering out of use. The only way to regain life is to wade into the freaks, stun one of them and leap on him for a one-button, contextual kill. We found that to be quite an interesting and entertaining system which made us rethink our usual tactics. You really need to know when to engage at range, when to go evasive and when to make an all-or-nothing berserker attack to replenish yourself.

The fairly linear trek through this shattered Forge World is a solitary affair, mostly because your two AI cohorts are seen but not useful (another reason is because Relic made the infuriating decision to not put the co-op mode on the disc). Stomping and slogging your way through this adventure is broken up only occasionally by on-rails sections and the intermittent acquisition of a jump pack. The latter opens up some cool combat options and some vertical traversal, but it's constantly stolen away from you just as the fun begins. Likewise, Relic is pretty mean with the player upgrades. There are only a handful of abilities to unlock and all of them are hopelessly generic (fury modes, bullet time, etc).

The good-but-not-great design of the single-player is mirrored in the online multiplayer modes. It's solid enough but is ultimately barebones and uninspiring thanks to a low map and gametype count, the lack of a cover system and the understandable, but annoying, clunky movement of the *Space Marines*. Combine this lacklustre multiplayer with a solo campaign that only lasts six or so hours, and *Space Marine* is an experience that's much too small for its impressive looking Powerboots. Only the super diehard need apply here. **Clint McCreadie**



Space Marines: custom built for war, not hugs



Not the best doctor for a prostate exam

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Uninspired environments, but great characters and gore a-plenty.

SOUND

Loved the British Orks and the gun sounds, the Space Marines are a bit too emotionless.

CONTROLS

Not the deepest melee system ever, but fun. Camera can interfere in tight spots.

REPLAY VALUE

Multiplayer lobbies won't be packed. Free Co-op DLC will be too little, too late.

Verdict

Starts out well with bursts of coolness, but quickly gets generic.

6

THE AWARD WINNING ACTION HERO RETURNS 03.11.11



PlayStation
Network

UNCHARTED 3

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Check the Classification



unchartedps3.com



PS3
PlayStation 3

SONY
make.believe

The Baconing

A bit short cut

Play this if you like

DeathSpank: Thongs of Virtue

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION RPG

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: HOTHEAD GAMES

DEVELOPER: HOTHEAD GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-2

RRP: \$19.95

Fans of loot hoarding with an irreverent twist will be dancing with glee at the return of the Hero to the Downtrodden, *DeathSpank*. Hothead Games has upped the ante with a focus on more challenging combat, but in doing so may have alienated their loyal RPG-loving fan-base.

Previous incarnations of *DeathSpank* were whimsical action-RPGs with hammy voice acting and ridiculous characters as you completed simple fetch quests using your expanded arsenal of justice. It was all about having a few chuckles as you shot, hacked and slashed your way through mythical creatures, with combat barely making you break a sweat.

The Baconing finds *DeathSpank* bored beyond belief. After reclaiming the six legendary thongs of power, he finds himself a



Up for **spanking** groups of giants?

soldier without a war and a tad despondent. On a whim he dons all six thongs simultaneously with disastrous results. The 'Anti-Spank' is born and seeks to destroy all creation.

Before he can lay waste to this abomination, *DeathSpank* must roast each thong in the mighty bacon fires and traverse some well and truly messed up kingdoms on the way. There's the Leprechaun Mafia to contend with, an inside-out version of Mickey Mouse and a *Tron* inspired world crossed with the *The Wizard of Oz* to name a few.

So far, so good, but the tweaked combat takes this flight of fancy and makes it downright frustrating with sporadic difficulty spikes and ridiculously long boss battles. The co-op woes continue with the second player sharing the same health bar (why?), almost negating the appeal entirely. *The Baconing* has all the same delicious ingredients, but this new recipe has nothing on the original. **Dave Kozicki**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Weird and wonderful, brimming with pop culture references

SOUND Infectious score and hilarious voice acting remain intact

CONTROLS Same old same old, though melee can be temperamental

REPLAY VALUE Not much, unless you embrace the half-arsed co-op

Verdict

There's something not quite kosher about *The Baconing*. Stick to earlier versions.

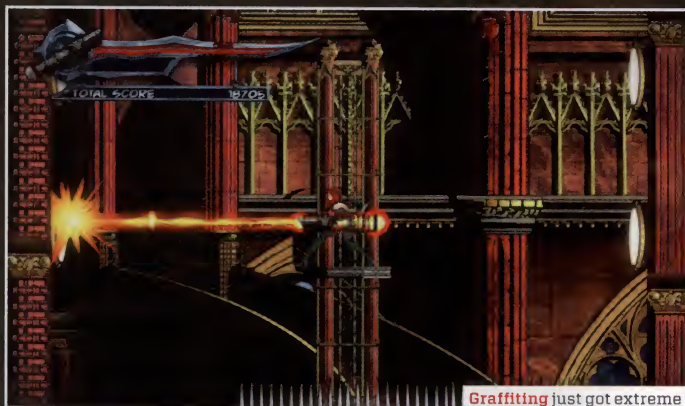
6



DeathSpank found this **thong of power** in the reviewer's drawer

BloodRayne: Betrayal

Forecast: vampires, with a high chance of Rayne



Graffitiing just got extreme

Play this if you like

Castle Crashers, Scott Pilgrim

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$19.95

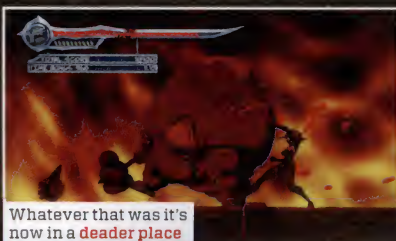
Remember *BloodRayne*? The franchise began as a campy but ultimately mediocre third-person brawler whose only real drawcard was its shamelessly hyper-sexualised protagonist – the eponymous vampire hunter Rayne. Then came a less-than-impressive sequel. Then Uwe Boll made an hilarious turd of a movie, which also got a sequel for some reason. Then the series dropped off the radar and everybody assumed it was gone for good.

But nope! Rayne's back, and she's looking pretty damn good. Developed by WayForward, *Betrayal* is a side-scrolling brawler in the same cartoony vein as *Castle Crashers* and the *Scott Pilgrim* game. The premise is this: you're Rayne, and there's a big castle full of vampires and other

monsters, and your job is to kill them dead.

Based around simple combos and strategic use of Rayne's special abilities, combat is energetic but elegant. At times the frantic pace can become overwhelming – particularly during boss fights, which err a little bit too much on the side of chaotic for our tastes – but since Rayne has unlimited lives and save points are plentiful, failure seldom begets frustration. Getting to the end of *Betrayal* is not a challenge, and neither is it supposed to be. The real challenge lies in being good at it: in mastering combat, finding all the hidden treasures, and getting a respectable end-of-level rating.

Betrayal is also rather gorgeous – with lovingly animated high-definition sprites and evocative illustrated backgrounds, it's a delight to behold with mere mortal eyes. Truly, if this is what *BloodRayne* is going to be like from now on, then we are all for it. That is, of course, assuming they keep Uwe Boll well away from future titles. **Dan Staines**



Whatever that was it's now in a **deader place**



Final Say

PRESENTATION Classy and colourful – a real treat for the eyes

SOUND Decent enough soundtrack, but not exactly catchy

CONTROLS Responsive, simple, and intuitive

REPLAY VALUE Pretty decent, assuming you want to find all the hidden goodies

Verdict

An accomplished, attractive beat-em-up for a reasonable price

8



CLASSICS HD

3D
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9/10 Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia

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**Strong violence,
Sexual references**

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PSB

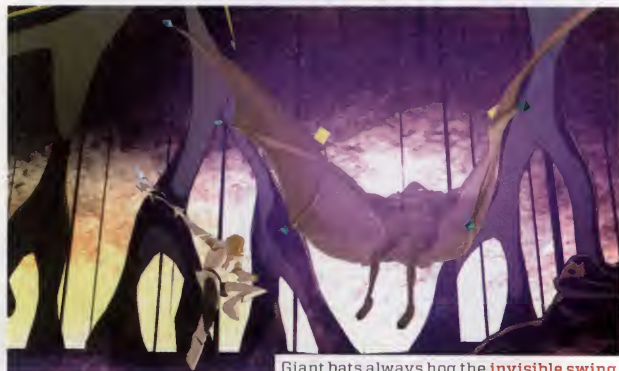
PlayStation 3



SONY
make.believe

El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron

Doubleyou Tee Eff, Japan



Giant bats always hog the invisible swing

Play this if you like

Bayonetta, Okami

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR:

MINDSCAPE

DEVELOPER: IGNITION

TOKYO

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$89.95



Don't ask us what *El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron* is about, because we have no effing idea. According to the game's website, it was apparently inspired by an ancient Hebrew text known as the Book of Enoch. Although we're not familiar with said book, we're going to go out on a limb here and say Enoch was probably not a hunky dude in designer jeans who does battle with robots made of motorbikes. And if he was, then... uh... crusty religious texts are a lot more interesting than we originally thought.

In any case, it doesn't really matter where the inspiration for *El Shaddai* came from, or that the game's so-called narrative doesn't make even the slightest bit of sense. What matters is that it is arguably the most breathtakingly beautiful and aesthetically inventive game on PS3 or any other platform. This world is so strikingly gorgeous, so fantastically original, and so flawlessly realised that the joy of exploration is its own motivation. What is this ethereal wonderland? How did you get here? What are you meant to be doing? All valid questions, but ultimately irrelevant.

Just look at this place, man. You've never seen anything else quite like it.

At first, the three button combat system (attack, block, jump) seems simplistic and limited, especially compared to games like *God of War* or *Bayonetta*. But as the game progresses and you acquire more weapons, and encounter a broader diversity of enemies, you begin to appreciate its hidden complexities. Where most brawlers tend to emphasise button combinations, *El Shaddai* is all about rhythm: by varying the speed at which you press the attack button, it's possible to execute a variety of devastating weapon-specific combos and counter attacks. This is generally unnecessary for regular goons, but for bosses it's an absolute must. *El Shaddai* is not the kind of game that lets you get away with mindless button mashing. You need to learn how to play it properly or it'll take you to school again and again.

Indeed, if there's one thing that prevents *El Shaddai* from being a genuine classic, it's the fact that it's often insanely frustrating. This is especially true of the game's numerous 2D platforming interludes, which – although gorgeous and imaginative – are marred by flighty physics and fastidious collision detection. Boss fights also tend to be vexatious, as it is often difficult to tell what you're supposed to do, and whether or not what you're doing is actually working.

There are other flaws we could mention, but they're relatively minor and easy enough to ignore. Taken as a whole, *El Shaddai* is a remarkable achievement, as beautiful as it is baffling. While its quirks prevent us from recommending it wholesale, for those of you who crave innovation and imagination in your gaming diet, this is something you simply cannot afford to miss. **Dan Staines**



Tru fax: God hates crows

Final Say

PRESENTATION In a word: magnificent. In a few other words: breathtakingly imaginative, ceaselessly surprising, and just all around luv-r-r-y.

SOUND Voice acting is predictably sub-par, but the soundtrack is eclectic and occasionally quite impressive.

CONTROLS Simple, elegant, precise. Floaty physics mar the platforming bits, but otherwise perfect.

REPLAY VALUE Not a great deal. *El Shaddai* is very much a one-time experience.

Verdict

A stunningly beautiful game let down only slightly by a nonsense narrative and periodic frustration.

8

El Shawha-?

El Shaddai is one of the Judaic names for God, typically translated as "God Almighty". There is some scholarly debate over the origin of the term, with the most compelling hypothesis being that "El Shaddai" originally meant "God of Shaddai" – Shaddai being a Bronze Age city on the banks of the Euphrates river – but gradually evolved into its more general form when famous émigrés used it during their travels.



Each ghost = a life lost in the last 20 seconds



Spelunker HD

Take your pick and shovel it

Play this if you like

Threading the eye of a needle with frayed cotton.

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: TOZAI
DEVELOPER: TOZAI
PLAYERS: 1-6
RRP: \$15.95

There are two ways to approach *Spelunker HD*. The first way, with the DualShock in your hand, is to take several deep breaths and a fistful of sedatives. It's a punishing remake (well, re-skin at least) of a coin-gobbling arcade game originally released in 1984 and the gameplay feels like it hasn't been updated a jot. The second, and most entertaining way, to experience *Spelunker* is by treating it as a spectator sport.

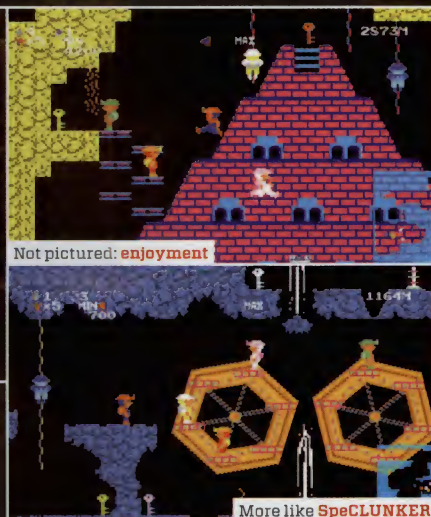
Sit back, watch your mate or sibling instantly die because their acrobatically challenged and brittle boned adventurer dared put his toe into a hole even a toddler could crawl out of. Or because he inched off a rope by a pixel's length. Or because he was shat on by a bat. Cue obnoxiously infectious death jingle each time. And it's only infectious because it's played

every three seconds. This sounds like an exaggeration, but we died FOURTEEN times in the tutorial alone.

The point is to get your spelunker from the start of the stage to the goal, picking up loot to line your pockets and the occasional key to unlock doors. Along the way you'll have to blow up rocks, dodge flames billowing out of the ceiling and even blow away ghosts.

To be as clear as possible we're not criticising *Spelunker* because it's 'old school'. *Mega Man*'s proof that retro design is still entertaining. We're criticising it because it's a badly designed game. It's no fun, offers minimal reward and only the most obsessive types will feel the need to continue. Also supports four-player local co-op but, really, there's little point.

Paul Taylor



Not pictured: enjoyment

More like SpeCLUNKER

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Reminiscent of a bloke programming in his bedroom in 1984. Scrappy but pragmatic.

SOUND

Sub 8-bit bleeps that fit with the times. Plus, most haunting death tune ever.

CONTROLS

Aneurism inducing. The tip that tells you how to deal with the hardest aspect is given at the very end of the tutorial.

REPLAY VALUE

Zip.

Verdict

Add two points if you don't actually play it and just watch someone or their hapless friends instead. There are much better platformers out there.

2

Galaga Legions DX

The right kind of buggy



Stupid bugs! You go squish now!

Play this if you like

Pac-Man Championship Edition DX

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ARCADE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$15.95

Among the glut of re-releases, re-skins, and re-makes is this genuine re-interpretation of an arcade classic. The basic premise remains the same: waves of aliens descend onto your ship in a top-down view while you do your frantic best to shoot them all down, while each succeeding attack comes at you in a new pattern. Then you rinse and repeat.

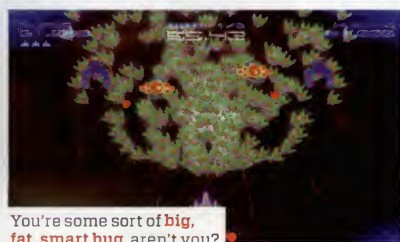
That's where the similarities end as like it's spiritual brother *Pac-Man Championship Edition DX* (a must-play) there's been a substantial twist. The patterns are recognisable and it's near essential to remember them in order to get faster and better. Each new wave is sketched out on the screen in a dizzying array of lights

and lines, and among the barrage of alien ships is a trigger that'll destroy the lot in a second.

Sometimes you'll have to blast through the horde to get to it, or figure out what the wave's going to be, or just remember it on a subsequent run through.

It sounds basic, but the further you progress without dying, the faster the game gets. Meanwhile an ever-ticking timer aggressively encourages you to do better. For perfectionists, an end-of-stage graph plots out how good you were and when, providing a strong incentive to see stages through, study your performance, and then restart with an eye to improvement.

Where *Galaga Legions DX* falls down is its lack of content. *Pac-Man* was full of different maps and modes while in *Legions* you're essentially doing the same thing over and over on a limited roster. But it's a hellishly addictive roster. **Paul Taylor**



You're some sort of big, fat, smart bug, aren't you?



Final Say

PRESENTATION

Blistering new graphics and the choice of turning on original sprites. Fast and slick.

SOUND

Mad beats punctuate the madness.

CONTROLS

Purists will balk at the side cannons that have changed their function. Everyone else will just think they're refined.

REPLAY VALUE

Scoreboard freaks will never leave their screens. Check the replays!

Verdict

The perfect game for snacking on between games, but with still enough guts to make it substantial on its own. Pretty, too.

8

Play this if you like

Castlevania:
Lords of Shadow,
Prince of Persia

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: TEAM ICO
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$59.95

They have a **cave troll**. A really effing big **cave troll**



ICO and Shadow of the Colossus Collection

Two blokes, two chicks, and a horse



Making lightning strike thrice

As we go print we're at TGS, spewing that Team Ico's third game *The Last Guardian* isn't here. It shares similarities with the previous two games in the series, whereby the hero is nearly tethered to a constant companion, each relying on the other to get the job done. In *ICO* you, as the hero Ico, are holding hands with Yorda. In *Shadow of the Colossus*, Wander is on his selfless horse Agro. *The Last Guardian* has a small boy grasping on to the feathers and fur of a giant mouse/hawk with arrows sticking out of his side. Eh? Exactly. None are explicitly linked in terms of story but they definitely enjoy a thematic and spiritual connection between them.

It's easy to get carried along by the casual (yet constant and loud) praise from those who actually bought these PS2 games in 2002 and 2006. "They're classics," they'd state, in the same tone and inflection that they'd say the word 'red' when describing a fire engine's primary colour – it's just a fact. Even if you've never played Team Ico's efforts it's impossible to dodge the feeling they're to be admired and revered; and not least because they're still commanding the amount of money you'd lay down on a new PS3 title.

Now they're back, no longer restricted to 60GB PS3s or never-say-die PS2s; totally repackaged, upscaled and with a touch more colour between the lines. We have no doubt, with or without the appreciators gushing over them, that this is a retro combo the PS3 had to have. And it's one of the best yet.

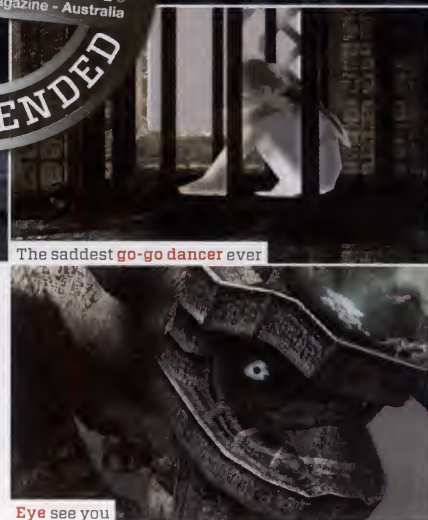
ICO's charming because it's simple but not simplistic. The plot: a cursed boy and a girl have to escape from a castle. The gameplay: third-person action-adventure. Quaint puzzles. No HUD. She can open doors with magical powers, he does all the leg work while hauling her around and showing her where to go. Everything unfolds at a steady pace despite it being a game you can knock over in an afternoon – there's a trophy for clocking it in under four hours, and another for rolling the credits in under two. Getting to this point though will take a few play throughs as well as

engaging your brain on few complex puzzles, so don't wrinkle your nose just yet.

Shadow of the Colossus feels like a title that should have been on PS3 to begin with. It struggled on the PS2 with a scrappy framerate though now it struggles with a five-year old animation system and controls that are clunkier than we remembered them to be. It's forgiven, as it's still a bold and powerful title; equal parts climbing, action, and puzzles, repeating itself with the same basic tasks over and over but evolving and respectably ramping up the difficulty. Our hero's task is simple: defeat 16 gigantic stone-and-moss colossi to revive a dead girl. Once you've felled your first couple of golems you'll grasp how to achieve your goal but it turns wonderfully weird not long after.

Coming back to these after a few years off still yields surprises, and we're somewhat jealous if you're approaching this with fresh eyes. Get past the wobbly-at-times physics, deal with the lack of a quick save, and lose yourself in the heart of each story.

These are two games that are about discovery, and although one of them is mostly concerned with literally grabbing another character by the hand, there's minimal handholding and interference within their design. Both are prime examples of rewarding hard work and you'll sometimes wish that games, in some regards, were still made like these two gems. **Paul Taylor**



The saddest **go-go dancer** ever

Eye see you

Final Say

PRESENTATION Jazzed up but impeccably true to the original material, though sometimes to its detriment

SOUND Crisp, emotive nonsensical languages. The spartan use of music crescendoes in a heart-pounding explosion of strings when each Colossus hits the dirt, too

CONTROLS Years of action games haven't been kind to *Shadow of the Colossus* in this regard

REPLAY VALUE Realistically, you'll go through both of these twice before leaving it in a special spot on your shelf, but there are a number of hard-to-get trophies

Verdict

Another classic collection worth shelling out for. Get it now while you still have gaming time

9

Street Fighter III: Third Strike – Online Edition

Let's fight like gentlemen!



Play this if you like

Street Fighter IV

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FIGHTING

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: IRON GALAXY

PLAYERS: 1-8

RRP: \$23.95

Street Fighter III: Third Strike is something of an oddity in the *Streeties* series. A commercial flop at the time of its release, over the years it gradually attracted a dedicated hardcore following and became a popular fixture at tournaments like EVO and Super Battle Opera. Now it's widely regarded as the pinnacle of the series – even better than *SFIV* and *Super Turbo* – and it's easy to see why.

Third Strike is an extraordinarily elegant game, expertly tuned and almost perfectly balanced. Newcomers accustomed to *SFIV*'s lenient control scheme will probably find



Thong-adorned Urien's attire counters Akuma's burning man routine

its exacting input windows merciless to the point of absurdity. Timing and precision are everything in this game: even the simplest special moves and combos will fail to execute properly if you don't get the inputs exactly right. The Dual Shock is going to feel the weight of nailing precise commands, but those that bought a proper fighting stick will be laughing.

As a revamped port of a game that's over a decade old, *Third Strike* is exemplary. Developer Iron Galaxy has clearly gone to a great deal of effort to make the game more accessible, including a bevy of basic tutorials and advanced challenge modes for each character. Online matches can sometimes lag a little, but as long as you're playing with someone in Australia, it's not a big problem.

Third Strike is not a perfect fighting game, but it's pretty damn close. Getting the most of it requires effort, but trust us: the payoff is more than worth it. **Dan Staines**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Beautifully drawn and animated sprites smoothed over with HD filters. Nice!

SOUND

The remixed soundtrack is disappointing, but the original is still genius.

CONTROLS

Precise and exacting. A Mad Catz stick will be your friend.

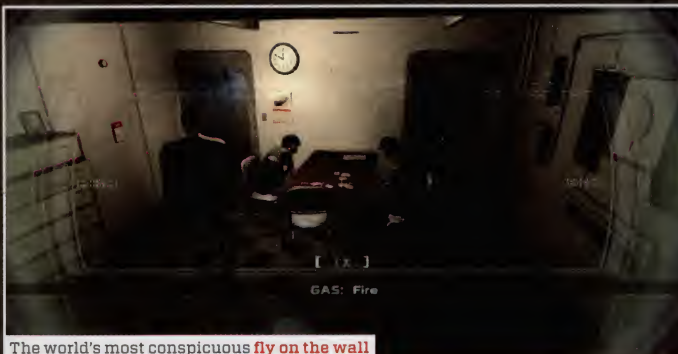
REPLAY VALUE

Endless. We've been playing for seven years and still aren't sick of it.

Verdict

Arguably one of the best fighting games ever made. You'd be foolish not to get this.

9



The world's most conspicuous fly on the wall

Shadow puppets to the extreme



Splinter Cell Trilogy HD

Sneaking back for another attack

Play this if you like

Syphon Filter, Metal Gear Solid

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION ADVENTURE

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT

DEVELOPER: VARIOUS

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$49.95

Sam Fisher. Gabe Logan. Solid Snake. Three heroes that defined the action genre. Their games may be different but each were (mostly) concerned with snapping necks and delivering a bullet between a chump's eyes without being seen. Gabe's nowhere to be seen, while Sam and Snake are gunning for your old-but-new dollar as the *Metal Gear Solid Collection* hits soon-ish in the coming months.

In this pack (which you can download from the PSN Store or buy on a disc, or even purchase as individual titles) are the original *Splinter Cell* and its sequels *Pandora Tomorrow* and *Chaos Theory*. Like other HD collections that we've seen in the last few issues (this one included), the individual titles have been given a visual coat of gloss, though the code itself has

barely been touched, meaning the gameplay and its content are the same, though you do get trophies. However, instead of dressing up the PS2 code, Ubisoft has ported the PC code. We're a little disappointed that they didn't optimise it to get rid of weird bugs that freeze the action when saving, and to also improve the original frame rate. The environments are sharp with a some incremental detail but a few niggling flaws only highlight how they've aged compared to well crafted games.

That's not to say that they're bad games, or unplayable. Far from it. They're well designed games that don't hold your hand, although *Pandora Tomorrow* does offer the new-to-series player a bit more flexibility. Still, it's hard to imagine anyone but fans picking this up given the time of year. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION You'll blow out your cheeks and think it could've been better ported and polished.

SOUND Fact: Sam Fisher owns the coolest night-vision gadget sound effect ever. You know it's true.

CONTROLS Tight, but ultimately strict. Maybe modern titles have spoiled us somewhat.

REPLAY VALUE Slim. The multiplayer's been cut, so it's once through for the story.

Verdict

A few bugs and glitches mar the experience making this less than essential. *Pandora Tomorrow*'s the best of the bunch if you're forced to choose.

7

F1 2011

Come worship at the temple of vroom



Play this if you like

F1 2010, Gran Turismo 5

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI

DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

BIRMINGHAM

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$109.95

Any F1 fan will tell you that this year's season has been quite the switch-up on the last, thanks to some rule changes by the FIA. Ever the devil in the details, Codemasters has evolved its digital version of the sport accordingly and created quite a different animal because of it. Fortunately, it's the sort of beast to love.

Mirroring the FIA shift to shorter-life Pirelli tyres, the handling in *F1 2011* has been overhauled considerably. Where last year's cars handled like hovercraft, now there's individual suspension for each tyre and a deeper feeling of being connected to the track. But while there's a bit more room to find that knife's edge of control, push it to the limit and you'll find the oversteer is merciless. It's certainly not like before, where the tap of the brake was a get-out-of-fail-free card.

The depth in handling and the potentials for disaster continue in the KERS and DRS systems, plus the new mechanical damage system. KERS and DRS are essentially limited use 'turbo boost' mechanics that need to be intelligently managed and tactically deployed



Smoking the opposition, literally

if you want a podium finish. Push it to the limit too hard, or fail to pander to the wants and needs of the car and your gears and various other systems will start to screw up. We found mechanical damage to arise out of recklessness rather than bad luck and it made every race that much more thrilling.

With superior handling, the solo career mode is obviously improved over last year; but Codies hasn't stopped there. You and a buddy can now race each other in the flawless new split-screen mode, or there's a two-player online co-op career, too. The term co-op is used loosely. Like real-life, two individual egos won't work if the other guy refuses to be the Milhouse to your Bart. Couple that hilarious experience with full grid multiplayer racing (16 humans, eight AI), the inclusion of safety cars and *F1 2011* has the power to leave even its predecessor in the dust. **Clint McCreadie**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Trackside is slightly improved over 2010, pit crew detail has gone back a step

SOUND Engineer no longer annoying, cars and skids sound slightly chunkier

CONTROLS Added handling depth and managing KERS and DRS is challenging

REPLAY VALUE Online XP system, co-op career and split-screen flesh this out heaps

Verdict

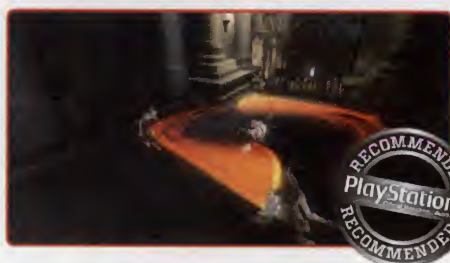
Tighter handling, prettier and great with mates online or off. Another podium finish for the impressive series.

9

Deploy oil slick. Whoops, **wrong game**



This sight means you're **not winning**



God of War Collection Volume II

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION **RELEASE:** NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY **DEVELOPER:** READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1 **RRP:** \$59.95

HD revamps seem to be the in thing at the moment, and that's perfectly fine with us so long as they're as good as this one. *God of War Collection Vol. II* takes two already excellent PSP games – namely *Chains of Olympus* and *Ghost of Sparta* – and gives them the full HD treatment. Rather than go the lazy route and simply stretch the game to 1080p, Ready at Dawn has meticulously updated everything from textures, to models, to music. The result is spectacular and, combined with the price, makes this collection a worthy purchase for all.

Verdict A must-own collection for fans of *God of War* and action junkies alike.

8



Child of Eden

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ODDBALL **RELEASE:** NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT **DEVELOPER:** Q
ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1 **RRP:** \$49.95

As trite as it sounds, *Child of Eden* is more an interactive art exhibit than a videogame. Spiritual successor to *Rez*, the basic idea is that you float around in stunningly beautiful psychedelic landscapes, shooting stuff to the rhythm of thumping club music produced by Tetsuya Mizuguchi's band, The Genki Rockets.

The extent to which you appreciate *Child of Eden* depends largely on how willing you are to overlook its simplistic mechanics and appreciate it on a purely aesthetic level. We like it a lot, but your mileage may vary.

Verdict Everything the spiritual success to *Rez* should be. Fun with Move, too!

8



Rugby World Cup 2011

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** SPORT **RELEASE:** NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: TUFFKATT ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER: HB STUDIOS **PLAYERS:** 1-16 **RRP:** \$69.95

First thing's first: although *Rugby World Cup 2011* is meant to be the official game of the actual sporting event, only 10 of the 20 competing teams have been officially licensed – and that DOESN'T include Australia or New Zealand. So if you buy this game expecting to take the Wallabies or All Blacks to victory, well... too bad. Maybe play as the USA?

Haha. Just kidding – you don't want to play as America, just like you don't want to play *RWC2011*. It's an ugly, frustrating, mess of a game.

Verdict This is the Rugby World Cup in name only. A thorough letdown across the board.

4



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Network

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PS3
PlayStation-3

SONY
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▶ WHAT'S NEW

PSN

DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

The game that keeps eating our time, *Driver: San Francisco*, has just been blessed with a bunch of DLC – it's free, but that's not even the best part. By the time you're reading this, 15 new routes have been added to the game's online modes and another seven are on the way. According to Ubisoft's maths, this will bolster the overall number of tracks by 30 per cent in just two months. It's a welcome surprise, as the head of Reflections Martin Edmondson told us back in issue #59 that no DLC was planned as everything was on the disc. It is technically on the disc, and you do have to connect to the 'net to play online and also receive the DLC.

There's also a *Driver Club* where you can watch and rate uploaded film clips made using the director mode, check your stats and leaderboards, and more. Go to www.driver-club.ubi.com for more info.

Fans of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* should get ready to slip back into Adam Jensen's shoes (but not his dusty coat) when its first lot of DLC hits. Titled *The Missing Link*, it details what happened over three days when Jensen goes missing. Stripped of his augmentations, Jensen will have to go back to basics to escape and also meet new people. It's not just a get-the-hell-outta-this scenario as new aspects of the conspiracy will be revealed, and you'll have to make new allies.

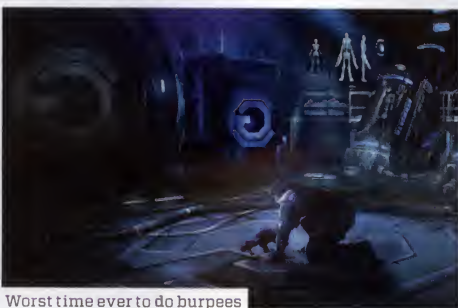
Dead Nation's zombie apocalypse continues, as the top-down shooter gets a new chapter. The DLC's called *Road of Devastation* and like any good add-on promises new weapons and an expanded storyline. Once you bust out of the test chamber you're held in you're given the



New augmentation needed: bullet proof chest

choice of three paths, each with different challenges and environmental layouts. At time of going to print, 11.7 billion zombies have been given a lead shower, with 3.8 million players. Impressive!

Music Unlimited, the Sony service that gives you, uh, unlimited access to hundreds of thousands of tracks on your PS3 and online using your PSN account details, is going to be rolled into Sony Entertainment Network. Video Unlimited will also be rolled into Sony Entertainment Network, but at this stage we don't know how this will affect the PSN video store. Parts of Sony Entertainment Network is also available on other devices, including Android smartphones and tablets.



Worst time ever to do burpees

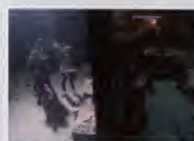
VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: Animated Videos



DAVID BOWIE - LET'S DANCE

We only just discovered that this was shot in Sydney, Australia. Keep an eye out for the bridge at the end.



RUN DMC - WALK THIS WAY

We're calling it: this is the greatest rock/rap crossover ever made. That riff's seriously infectious.



MICHAEL JACKSON - BEAT IT

The late King of Pop solves gang violence by flicking his feet and loosening 'heeyow!' and 'meehee!' Genius.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available **free** on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



FIFA 12

We loved parts of the full game (see page 72) though the updated defending mechanics left us a little cold. *OPS* challenge: see how many red cards you can get in a match. We like to go in studs up as much as possible.



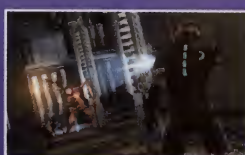
ACE COMBAT: ASSAULT HORIZON

It's not just Ridge Racer, another Namco stalwart, that's getting a radical makeover (see page 48). This demo is all about tight, focussed action that'll have you spitting dirt, dust and gravel.



PES 2012

On the other side of the pitch is Konami's effort. It has struggled in previous years to keep up with FIFA's endless improvements and refinements though the die hard fans won't be swayed. Is this the year you make the switch?



DEAD SPACE

The full game is now on the PSN for the bargain price of \$29.95, and it represents a brilliant future for survival horror. Even though it's a little old it's still fantastically atmospheric (though the asteroid section still sucks).



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2: ADD ON BUNDLE

We just keep coming back to *Battlefield*, and this pack for \$49.95 also includes the Vietnam expansion, Onslaught Mode, all the SPECAC kits and more!

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network

TROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies.



Daniel Beames

Game: God of War III

Trophy: Hit Man



Was a crazy 10 - 20 minutes of continuous

button pushing..

Controller nearly went through the wall!



Joel Meekings

Game: Mafia II

Trophy: Hard To Kill



Surviving that 10 minutes with cops chasing

you and shooting at you on hard difficulty is near impossible!



Joel Phillips

Game: Ratchet and Clank Future: A Crack in Time



Trophy: My Blaster Runs Really Really Hot

Only time I actually put effort into a trophy - luckily I had help!



Fellas, your puppets are missing

GENRE: SHOOTER **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: TREYARCH **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **RRP:** \$22.95

DLC >

Call of Duty: Black Ops - Rezurrection

"Fly me to The Moon"

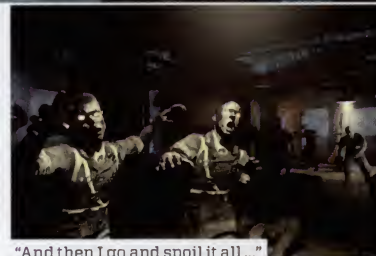
This fourth map pack is the first dedicated purely to zombies and the one that favours teamwork the most. Players who try to battle the waves of undead on their lonesome are going to get whipped. Backed up with a tight fist of your closest mates battling the brain eaters it's empowering. But you probably already knew that.

Rezurrection is a pack that had the most promise but instead feels stale since four out of the five maps - Nacht der Untotenare, Verrukt, Shi No Numa and Der Riese - are recycled from World at War, but with better lighting and slightly rearranged boxes. Only The Moon is new. Sure, it's handy having a cluster of maps from an old game bolted onto a new one and in a convenient location, but it's also cheeky.

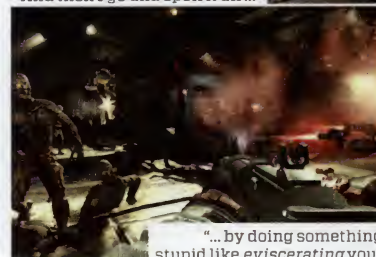
However, the new map is a riot. From the starting point in Area 51 you can either teleport straight to the giant satellite or hang around and be swamped by enemies. Though it's a bit of a grind it gives you ample opportunity to rack up points you can spend in the low gravity environment.

Once you're there it's crucial to wear a spacesuit (plenty around) though the helmet deadens the sound effects making for an eerie quiet as you're blasting away. Running dives are a laugh and make average players feel like a freakin' hero.

You're also given two new weapons; a wave gun that blows up zombies from the inside (accompanied by vomiting blood) and a grenade that, when tossed, generates a random effect.



"And then I go and spoil it all..."



"...by doing something stupid like eviscerating you"

VERDICT

Ultimately unessential. Did you play World at War to death? You can leave this be and put your coin towards *The Next Big Thing*. We're fairly miffed by the lack of genuine new content; if The Moon was available on its own we'd snap it up in a second.



PlayStation®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH
PLAYERS: 1-16

Take MW2 and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. However, we especially like playing Zombies with a skilled compatriot.



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
PLAYERS: 2-8

Excellent. You'll spend most amount of your time playing Tag and Trailblazer, and while it sounds slim it's indescribably addictive. Believe us when we say it's worth it just for this alone.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

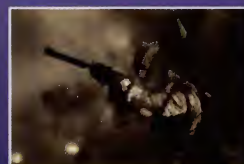
It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1-22

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

DEVELOPER: DICE
PLAYERS: 1-16

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves.

► DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

Cool Car Club

Driver: San Francisco has 140 cars. They're either the latest models in a marque's roster (Aston Martin Cygnet), a bold experiment (Chevrolet Volt) or an example of motoring excellence (McLaren SLR). Here we've compiled 21 of the coolest cars you can find and where to find them. The grid reference refers to the map found in the Collector's Edition, else follow our handy guide. Happy motoring!

Top Tips

- Some cars in our list are only found by buying a certain garage but most can only be got by completing challenges – you'll need to either finish the story missions or be close to the end of the game. By the time you reach Chapter 5 you'll be very close to opening up all of them.
- Once you do complete the story you can continue in Free Drive, mopping up any remaining challenges and dares. Or you can plough on to 'New Game Plus' and do it all over again
- There is no 'best' car, though we found the Lamborghini Murciélago LP670-4 SV to be a fantastic balance of speed and handling. However, it is 750,000WP. Else the Ford GT is a snip at 150,000WP and will clear most jumps to get those tricky film challenge tokens that tend to hang metres above the road.





Car: Oldsmobile Cutlass
Event: Pursuit 1
Map Ref: L11



Car: Shelby Cobra 427
Event: Speed Trap 2
Map Ref: L14



Car: DMC DeLorean
Event: Smash 1
Map Ref: J11



Car: Pontiac GTO 'The Judge'
Event: Sprint 4
Map Ref: J13



Car: Hudson Hornet
Event: Adrenaline 1
Map Ref: I9



Car: Lamborghini Jalpa
Event: Speed Trap 1
Map Ref: H11



Car: Audi Sport Quattro S1
Event: Forest Hill
Map Ref: F15



Car: Ford RS200
Event: Forest Hill
Map Ref: F15



Car: Lancia Stratos
Event: Forest Hill
Map Ref: F15



Car: Alfa Romeo Giulia TZ2
Event: Adrenaline 4
Map Ref: F12



Car: Chevrolet Bel Air
Event: Open Race 2
Map Ref: C11



Car: Aston Martin DB5
Event: Smash 3
Map Ref: G16



Car: Y.A.R.E. Buggy
Event: Pursuit 3
Map Ref: C11

► MUST WATCH

X-Men: First Class (M)

DIRECTOR: MATTHEW VAUGHN
STARRING: JAMES MCAVOY, MICHAEL FASSBENDER, KEVIN BACON, ROSE BYRNE, JENNIFER LAWRENCE **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Considering the hack job Brett Ratner did on the last *X-Men* flick, we're partially amazed this even got green lit. Director Matthew Vaughn brings his trademark eye for action, but more importantly heart and soul to the origin story of the Marvel universe's two most timeless characters: Professor X and Magneto. The moral duality between mutant juggernauts and once friends Xavier and Lehnsherr (Magneto) is sensitively brought to the screen and brilliantly acted by McAvoy and Fassbender respectively. You empathise with the horrors the young Lehnsherr had to endure making him far more than a cardboard cutout villain. The action sequences are perfectly executed and the attention to detail across the board keeps fans happy and newcomers interested in the interesting *X-Men* universe. Keep an eye out for a couple of scene-stealing cameos from two unexpected *X-Men* that complement the humour throughout the film.

Watch this if you like *The Dark Knight*

Verdict

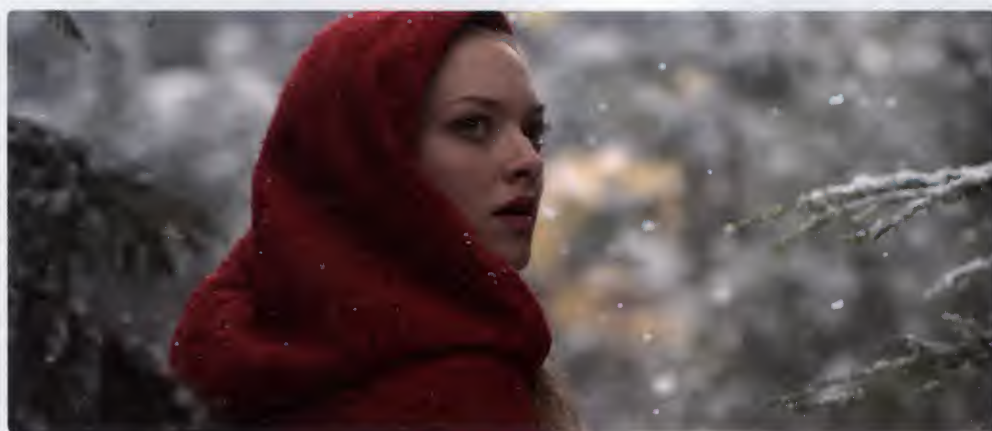
We can't find a single film on Vaughn's roster we don't like and *X-Men: First Class* is no exception

9

"Matthew Vaughn brings his eye for action"



Magneto shakes hands with the Statue of Liberty without even touching her. Woah



Red Riding Hood (M)

DIRECTOR: CATHERINE HARDWICKE **CAST:** AMANDA SEYFRIED, GARY OLDMAN, BILLY BURKE
AVAILABLE: (RENT) \$5.99 (OWN) \$32.99, 3700MB (HD)

Good grief, what a terrible idea for a movie. A dark and gritty reimagining of the famous children's tale, the story goes something like this: Villager Valerie (i.e., Red Riding Hood) is in love with one hunk, but her parents want her to marry another hunk. Then a werewolf kills her sister. Then the villagers go and hunt the werewolf, but, instead, kill a regular wolf and... actually, you know what? Just forget it. Don't watch this movie. That's all you need to know. It's a bad idea, poorly executed, and should never have been made in the first place.

While the cinematography is interesting at times, even Gary Oldman phones it in for what we can only imagine was an easy paycheck for the talented and usually ridiculously memorable thespian.

Verdict Amanda Seyfried is pretty hot. This movie? Not so much. Nothing to see here. Move along.

4

PlayStation®Store

► TOP TEN

Movies on Demand



- 1 Fast & Furious 5**
Universal Pictures
- 2 Paul** Universal Pictures
- 3 Arthur** Warner Bros.
- 4 Season of the Witch**
Roadshow Films
- 5 Sucker Punch**
Warner Bros.
- 6 Faster** Sony Pictures
- 7 No Strings Attached**
Paramount Pictures
- 8 Rango** Paramount Pictures
- 9 Am Number Four**
Touchstone Pictures
- 10 Initial D: 3rd Stage**
Madman Entertainment

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Star Wars: The Clone Wars – Complete Season 3

(PG)

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS **CAST:** MATT LANTER, ASHLEY ECKSTEIN, JAMES ARNOLD TAYLOR, DEE BRADLEY BAKER **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Although the movie sucked, the computer animated *Clone Wars* television series has gone from strength to strength in the last three years, capturing the same sense of lighthearted adventure that made the original trilogy so great in the first place. While the first half of the third season feels a little slow, later episodes pick up the pace considerably and contain some of the most exciting lightsaber duels in the entire series. With extra features including 30 deleted scenes, test animations, and concept art, fans of the series should be well pleased with this package.

It breathes new life into an abused franchise.

Watch this if you've already seen the first two seasons. Otherwise start at the beginning.

Verdict Not the best season in the series, but a great watch nevertheless.

8



Thor

(M)

DIRECTOR: KENNETH BRANAGH **STARRING:** CHRIS HEMSWORTH, NATALIE PORTMAN, TOM HIDDLESTON, ANTHONY HOPKINS, STELLAN SKARSGARD, KAT DENNINGS, IDRIS ALBA **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

It was always going to be a tough ask bringing *Thor* to the big screen. The Norse god doesn't really translate all that well from the comic book page. Kenneth Branagh is an odd directorial choice for such an action-oriented extravaganza and while he gets the look down pat, there just isn't any substance. Chris Hemsworth is a fine Aussie actor, but lacks the on-screen presence of his movie superhero brethren. The arrogant thunder god, Thor, is cast out from Asgard down to the realm of mere mortals to learn humility. In his absence, his scheming half-brother Loki plots to overthrow his father and claim dominion over the mythical kingdom. *Thor* is both visually entertaining and instantly forgettable.

Watch this if you like *Ghost Rider*

Verdict Skip this and enjoy the God of Thunder in measured doses in *The Avengers* next year.

5



Tucker and Dale vs. Evil

(MA15+)

DIRECTOR: ELI CRAIG **STARRING:** ALAN TUDYK, TYLER LABINE, KATRINA BOWDEN **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

A hilarious case of mistaken identity leads to death on a grand scale when fun-loving and harmless hillbillies Tucker (Tudyk – *Firefly*) and Dale (Labine – *Reaper*) are mistaken by some accident-prone preppy college douchebags for serial killers. Thrown into the mix is the scorching hot Allison (Bowden – *30 Rock*) who, after injuring herself, is looked after by the hapless duo with kidnapping now added to their expanding list of perceived felonies. The weight of the film is thrown squarely on the shoulders of the eminently likeable pairing of Tudyk and Labine who effortlessly bounce off one another. Unfortunately, the rest of the cast doesn't fare nearly as well.

Watch this if you like *Fright Night*

Verdict Worth a look if you're a fan of the leads, though that may not be enough of a draw card for all.

7



Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides

(M)

DIRECTOR: ROB MARSHALL **CAST:** JOHNNY DEPP, PENELOPE CRUZ, IAN MCCHANE, GEOFFREY RUSH **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides is fan service at its fullest. The franchise's director Gore Verbinski has stepped away as have Orlando Bloom and Keira Knightly to allow the spotlight to shine brightly on Captain Jack Sparrow, the irrepressible rogue brought to life by Johnny Depp. The premise is pretty much standard *Pirates* fare, with Depp in search of an object of legend as well as longing for his lost ship, the *Black Pearl*. The swashbuckling sequences work a treat and the film is extremely well shot, but the plot stalls with a useless subplot that fixates on two minor characters.

Watch this if you like Any other *Pirates* film

Verdict Depp is charming as ever but the story has too many unnecessary tangents.

6



Community Season 2

(M)

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS **STARRING:** JOEL MCHALE, GILLIAN JACOBS, DANNY PUDI, YVETTE NICOLE BROWN, DONALD GLOVER, ALISON BRIE, CHEVY CHASE **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

Jeff Winger (McHale) runs point as a former disbarred lawyer working his way through the painfully average Greendale Community College. An oddball cast of supporting characters help keep things fresh. Overflowing with pop culture references, fantastic chemistry between the cast and just that little hint of Apatow-styled wrongness, *Community* isn't afraid to take risks as the claymation Christmas tale proved, as well as the moving *Dungeons & Dragons* based epic. The paintball war episodes are easily the highlight, with season two moving away from Hong Kong-inspired John Woo themes to Spaghetti Westerns and *Star Wars*.

Watch this if you like *The Big Bang Theory*

Verdict One of the great ensemble cast TV shows still around. Check it out now.

9



RideBack

(M)

DIRECTOR: ATSUSHI TAKAHASHI **CAST:** TIA LYNN BALLARD, TERI DOTY, STEPHEN HOFF **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY/DVD

You know you're in good hands when the director worked as an assistant to Japan's first son of anime, Hayao Miyazaki, on the classic *Spirited Away*. Those sensibilities carry over to this atypical story about a young ballerina, Rin, following in her deceased mother's footsteps. When a torn femur ends the young dancer's dreams, Rin becomes obsessed with a new vehicle that's building a huge underground following, the RideBack. Try to imagine a motorcycle with robotic arms to aid in balance and you'll be on the right track. Joining the local club and racing professionally, Rin learns of a bond between certain riders and their RideBack that stretches beyond circuitry and defies explanation. What secrets could her RideBack, Fuego, be hiding and why is the military so interested?

Watch this if you like *Macross*

Verdict A more intriguing taste of anime with loads of cross-genre appeal and action set pieces.

7

► NOW SHOWING

Crazy, Stupid, Love (M)

DIRECTOR: GLENN FICARRA, JOHN REQUA
CAST: EMMA STONE, RYAN GOSLING, STEVE CARELL
IN CINEMAS: NOW

Cal Weaver (Carrell) is as staid as they come. He has a stable job, a teenage son and is happily married to his highschool sweetheart (Moore). Then it all turns to crap as his wife leaves him for another man (the excellent Kevin Bacon) and wants a divorce since he takes the family for granted. Cal's unwillingly thrust back onto the meat market without a clue about what to do, until he meets the remarkable Jacob (Gosling), a dedicated ladies man who's deft at putting a bit of spice back into Cal's life by teaching him his ways.

Still, it's never as easy as it should be and his romantic life starts to become complicated. Cal's son Robbie likes the look of his teenage sitter, Jessica, who in turn only wants Cal. Then Cal gets involved with Kate (Tomei) who's actually Robbie's teacher. Jacob's own life becomes equally complicated when the unyielding Hannah (Stone) arrives on the scene.

It all sounds rather complex but it's played out perfectly as the cast take the script and run with it, without letting it be over played or hammy. It's a romantic comedy by definition but then again so is *The 40 Year Old Virgin*. You'll be swept along by plot and the pacing which tugs you along nicely. Directors Ficarra and Requa also made the hilarious *Bad Santa*, and while *Crazy, Stupid, Love* isn't as extreme you can see the stylistic connection, and it comes together effortlessly and in nice contrast to the hell that the characters go through. Recommended, even if you're not trying to find a middle ground with your movie date.

Watch this if you like *Bad Santa*



"Say, you know the word that describes you? 'Chump'"



When hide-and-seek goes very, very wrong

Fright Night (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: CRAIG GILLESPIE **CAST:** ANTON YELCHIN, COLIN FARRELL, CHRISTOPHER MINTZ-PLASSE, TONI COLLETTE, IMOGEN POOTS, DAVID TENANT **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Highschool student Charley Brewster (Yelchin) is the king of the kids. He's in with the cool gang and is with the most bangin' babe of the school Amy (Poots). His mate Ed (Mintz-Plasse) is painfully geeky though and is on the outer. However, major trouble arrives when a new neighbour Jerry (Farrell) arrives.

Charley suspects Jerry's a vampire, and there's some decidedly weird crap going on in the 'hood. Other people seem fairly blind to it though, and even his mother (Collette) is blithely unaware. Jerry's honing in on Charley, toying with him before going for the kill. It's up to Charley to get rid of the monster lest the monster makes him his next meal.

This remake of the 1985 flick doesn't have the same horrific impact of the original but it's more than watchable, and it's very funny too. This change

in tone has opened it up to a new audience who don't want to be horrified whilst being entertained — we're pretty happy about the change. Yelchin's joined Jesse Eisenberg and Michael Cera as another slightly geeky underdog hero, while Mintz-Plasse just keeps playing the characters that he has in *Kick-Ass* and *Superbad*.

However, Farrell's really been let loose here, taking great pleasure in a role that he's obviously allowed to have fun with, riffing on the usual vampire characteristics with his own flair. It's remarkable how versatile he is.

Fright Night starts to falter in the closing moments as the inevitable transformation is handled with some clumsy CG effects. However it's still thrilling with a bit of blood and guts being splashed around to distract from the so-so effects.



Feeling a little blue? So's Papa Smurf

The Smurfs (G)

DIRECTOR: RAJA GOSNELL **CAST:** HANK AZARIA, NEIL PATRICK HARRIS, JAYMA MAYS, SOFIA VERGARA
IN CINEMAS: NOW

This should come with a health warning, as it's so sickly, nauseatingly sweet in an overdone and overenthusiastic way that you might develop diabetes by the time the credits roll, or claw your eyes and eardrums out of your skull to escape the pain. We imagine you'd only go to this if you're badgered into it by your offspring or some misguided calculation that a cartoon from your early childhood would translate well into a 3D CGI flick. It doesn't

The plot? *The Smurfs* are in modern day New York and are being chased by evil wizard Gargamel and his freaky cat as the wiz wants Smurf essence. The little blue Belgians then meet a human couple Patrick (Harris) and Grace (Mays) who are about to have a child. He's got work trouble and is constantly under the pump and she's worried about him. Papa Smurfs sorts them out with a morale about friendship, insert some lines where normal curse words are replaced with 'smurf' (for example 'smurf happens', 'where the smurf are we'), credits roll, home time.

However it's all par for the course since Gosnell has also weaved the Scooby Doo movies and Beverly Hills Chihuahua, which should soon be joined by *The Smurfs* in the dustiest, never-rent section of Blockbuster.



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index

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand 7
SWORDFISH STUDIOS
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.

Captain America: Super Soldier 4
NEXT LEVEL GAMES
Beguilingly awful, from the poor graphics to the will-sapping combat and platforming.

Army of Two: The 40th Day 7
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original *Army of Two*.

Avatar 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta 9
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

Bionic Commando 7
GRIN
There are some great moments but they're few and far between.

The Bourne Conspiracy 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish but superficial.

The Club 8
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.

Damnation 3
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

Dark Void 6
AIRTIGHT GAMES
Uninspiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.



DEAD RISING 2 9
DEVELOPER: BLUE CASTLE GAMES
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-4
"You'll wear a stupid grin pretty much from start to finish and it's a riot in co-op. A must-play. The satisfaction of literally cutting down thousands of zombies with anything you can pick up is its only hook but it works a treat."

Dead to Rights: Retribution 6
VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry 4 7
CAPCOM
Memorable bosses but too much backtracking spoils things.

Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon 5
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.

Front Mission Evolved 7
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
Likable but limited mech-based combat.

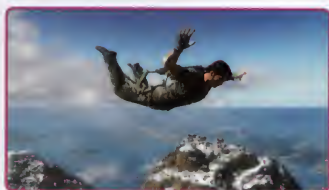
Genji: Days of the Blade 5
GAME REPUBLIC
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game 9
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented. Find it cheap and save it for a rainy day.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge 7
INXILE
A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters 6
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
A *God of War* clone that betrays its canon.

John Woo Presents: Stranglehold 7
MIDWAY CHICAGO
Packs frantic *Max Payne*-lite fun.



JUST CAUSE 2 9
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. This insane action game is dirt cheap as it's now part of the Platinum range."

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men 6
IO INTERACTIVE
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days 7
IO INTERACTIVE
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

Lost Planet 2 7
CAPCOM
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Weak in many areas but has fun in spades. *The Saboteur* does it better, though.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight 3
NAMCO BANDAI
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 8
TEAM NINJA
A treasure trove of violent gaming goodness.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 8
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 8
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

Red Faction: Armageddon 7
VOLITION, INC.
Brown, corridor-based action. Snore.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla 9
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

Saints Row 2 9
VOLITION, INC.
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

RECOMMENDED SOCOM: Special Forces 8
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Great online with *Move* and a Sharp Shooter, though solo ain't that special.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation 6
SLANT SIX GAMES
A sturdy effort that fails to excite.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm 6
NAMCO BANDAI
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 8
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

Transformers: Dark of the Moon 5
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
A near brainless movie tie-in with little merit.

Transformers: War for Cybertron 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Good multiplayer, and that's about it.

RECOMMENDED Vanquish 8
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate 5
GRIN
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk 9
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

WET 8
A2M
Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

Wheelman 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS
Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone throughout.

X-Men Origins: Wolverine 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
A head silcin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

Alice: Madness Returns 7
SPICY HORSE
Marries great ideas and concepts with average to awful platforming.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A landmark, though slightly dated now.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God. Cheap, too.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURY STEAM
Easily one of the best games of 2010.

Clash of the Titans 4
GAME REPUBLIC
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno 8
VISCERAL GAMES
Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders 8
VIGIL GAMES
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2 9
VISCERAL GAMES
What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

Demon's Souls 7
FROM SOFTWARE
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

Fairytale Fights 7
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

Folklore 8
GAME REPUBLIC
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

The Godfather: The Don's Edition 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it.

¡Viva la Revolución!



Guerrilla warfare was originally proposed and formalised by Chinese warbrain Sun Tzu in 600 BC, and has been effectively utilised in conflicts over the course of history, including the Chinese and Cuban Revolutions, the Spanish Civil War, and the Martian Rebellion of 2021. Famous guerrillas include Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Mao Zedong, and Alec Mason, aka Space Hammer Harry.

Way cool

On July 9 2005, professional skateboarder/nutcase Danny Way made history by being the first person in the world to jump over the Great Wall of China without motorised aid. Using the so-called Beijing Mega Ramp to clear the 61 foot gap, Way and his skateboard went careening over the historic structure's Ju Yong Guan Gate a total of FIVE times. More impressive than *Skate 2*'s Murderhorn, yes?

The Godfather II 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film. Play *Mafia II* instead.

ESSENTIAL God of War III 10
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection 9
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider 4
SECRET LEVEL
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV 10
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City 9
ROCKSTAR NORTH
Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 6
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Heavenly Sword 9
NINJA THEORY
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox. Get this and the sequel.

inFAMOUS 2 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

LEGO Batman 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
The most thorough LEGO universe yet but it is getting a bit samey.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures 9
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean 7
TRAVELLER'S TALES
You should know from the title if you'd like this or not. It is what it is, and it's okay.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars 8
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action. Kids should adore it.

Lost: Via Domus 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. If you can find it cheap grab it for a rainy day.

Mafia II 8
2K CZECH
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots 10
KIJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane. A titan amongst games. Epic.

Overlord II 8
TRIUMPH STUDIOS
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End 6
EUROCOM
Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't feel or play the part.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 10

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR **PLAYERS:** 1-16
"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than *GTAIV* in a lot of crucial areas. Also, the zombie-themed *Undead Nightmare* DLC is boss."

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 9
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

SAW II: Flesh & Blood 6
ZOMBIE INC.
Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

Shadows of the Damned 7
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay from two geniuses of design. Pity.

Silent Hill Homecoming 6
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

Sonic the Hedgehog 4
SONIC TEAM
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

Sonic Unleashed 6
SONIC TEAM
Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions 5
BEENOX
Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows 7
TREYARCH / SHABA GAMES
Swift and tidy but not exactly deep.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 7
LUCASARTS
Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II 6
LUCASARTS
Gets a point-and-a-bit for hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent 9
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

Toy Story 3 7
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
Cute, simple, and charming as hell.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune 10
NAUGHTY DOG
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

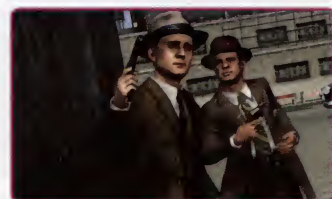
ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Viking: Battle for Asgard 7
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its appeal.

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 8
CS1 TEAM
One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain 8
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.



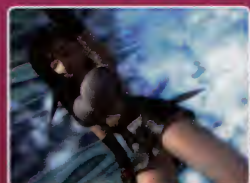
L.A. NOIRE 10

DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR **PLAYERS:** 1
"The game world itself is the most detailed we've ever seen. If Team Bondi's Los Angeles was a skirt she'd be a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window. The patient mix of slow-paced adventure gaming and well-executed open world action is hugely satisfying."

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust 1
TEAM17 SOFTWARE
An amazing new low for this generation.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



FINAL FANTASY VII
DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged. Final Fantasy VII is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER
DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED
DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, this is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER
DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIEVIL
DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *Medievil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

EA Black Box

LOCATION: BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA FOUNDED: 1998

BEST KNOWN FOR: SKATE

We're cautious to paint Black Box as a hit factory, though on the surface it's an apt description of it for better or worse. They're a studio that's produced and shifted an immense number of titles, and often in a short space of time between gigs.

Looking at the list of game they appear to be fairly comfortable with it, and not afraid to innovate with series with a solid formula. Black Box have made nine *Need for Speed* games each year since 2002, breaking only to code one of the greatest casual sports titles ever, *Skate*, and its sequels.

"A lot of people who arrive on this team come from very good game studios," says Alex Grimbley, Producer. "There's just an aura around Black Box. When you see the posters of all the titles, and the unit [sales] that goes with them, you think 'well, where you came from probably wasn't as big a deal as *Need For Speed* Black Box.' There's a blend of old and new team members as well – we have people who worked on 15 versions of *Need for Speed*. I think Black Box is one of the only studios that has that legacy of delivering a mega franchise and keeping it going year after year."

Black Box demonstrated their aptitude for making *Speed* games with

Underground, a bold experiment that tapped into an aspect of car culture and also brought it to the masses by crucially folding in a story.

It was so much of a success that it warranted a sequel a year later. Then *Most Wanted* after that. While it's good for EA's bank account, it's tiring pumping out a game year after year. Says Grimbley, "What people on development teams want is the ability to be creative and be innovative and put the ideas that they have in their head into action. So when another team comes in and does a cycle [as Criterion did with *Hot Pursuit* last year] it was a great break. It kept the franchise going, brought new people in, it was awesome, but at the same time it allowed us time to switch [game engines to Frostbite], and really push the quality of our game as well."

They're not done pushing the PS3 either. "We always think there's a boundary [to what you can achieve] and we always push the team to think outside of that and deliver more. At this moment in time I have no idea what else we'll be able to do, but I think that in a year's time there'd be five or six more things that we've discovered that we didn't think was possible."

FIGHTING

Battle Fantasia 7
ARC SYSTEM WORKS
A nice curiosity but, seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.

RECOMMENDED BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 9
ARC SYSTEM WORKS
Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

The Fight: Lights Out 5
COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

The King of Fighters XII 3
SNK PLAYMORE
Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable..

RECOMMENDED Marvel vs. Capcom 3 8
CAPCOM
Fast, fun and gorgeous. Features Haggar.

RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat 8
NETHERREALM
Technically not available in Aus, it's a sterling return to form for the series. Funny, too.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 10
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/DIMPS
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2
"With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay – but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price – *Super Street Fighter IV* belongs in everyone's collection."

Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition 8
CAPCOM
For first time purchasers only. For everyone else there's DLC.

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

TNA Impact! 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS – LOS ANGELES
Arcade-style biff but needs more content.

WWE Legends of WrestleMania 6
YUKE'S
Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 8
YUKE'S
If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

FLIGHT

NEW Air Conflicts: Secrets Wars 4
BITCOMPOSER
Haphazard design, unforgivable mistakes and awful sound make this a true dud.

Apache: Air Assault 7
GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII 7
UBISOFT ROMANIA
A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII 6
UBISOFT ROMANIA
Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

Heroes Over Europe 7
TRANSMISSION GAMES
A little rough but not bad. *IL-2* is much better.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY 8
DEVELOPER: GAJJIN ENTERTAINMENT
PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16
"Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played."

Lair 5
FACTOR 5
It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 7
UBISOFT ROMANIA
Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

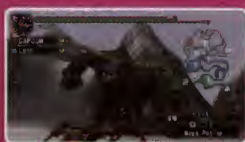
RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8
UBISOFT ROMANIA
A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



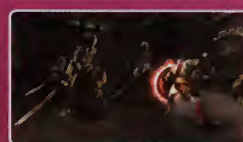
WIPEOUT PULSE
DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
PLAYERS: 1-8

Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER
DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PLAYERS: 1-6

A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*; this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1

Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack 7
HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

Band Hero 7
NEVERSOFT
It works but the songs have been censored.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band 9
HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and some excellent, unique mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band 8
HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock 9
NEVERSOFT
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

Guitar Hero World Tour 9
NEVERSOFT
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

Guitar Hero 5 7
NEVERSOFT
Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica 8
NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits 7
BEENOX
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?

Guitar Hero: Van Halen 6
UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock 7
NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.

LEGO Rock Band 8
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

Michael Jackson The Experience 5
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Better with mates but feels cheap.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 10
HARMONIX
The best party game ever, until the sequels.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 10
HARMONIX
The best music game series around.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3 9
HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

SingStar 8
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

Ape Escape 4
JAPAN STUDIO
A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

EyePet 7
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Hail to the Chimp 3
WIDELOAD GAMES
Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

Kung Fu Rider 3
JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-based rubbish. A terrible example of a Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes 7
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

The Shoot 6
COHORT STUDIOS
A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation. It won't blow your skirt up forever, though.

RECOMMENDED Sports Champions 8
ZINDAGI GAMES
Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

Yoostar 2 7
BLITZ GAME STUDIOS
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2 9
BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.

RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet 2 9
MEDIA MOLECULE
Like the original it's innovative and never-ending. Improves upon an amazing product.

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RACING

Blur 7
BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise 9
CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

Cars 2 7
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
Kids will love this solid kart racer.

Colin McRae: DiRT 9
CODEMASTERS
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2 7
CODEMASTERS
Drives fine but it's style over substance here.

RECOMMENDED DiRT 3 8
CODEMASTERS
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound. The gymkhana events are a highlight.

NEW RECOMMENDED Driver: San Francisco 9
REFLECTIONS
The series returns to its roots and delivers superb action-adventure racing. A must get.



GRAN TURISMO 5 9
DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL
PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16
"*GT5* feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

Fuel 4
ASOBO STUDIOS
Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked. Deserves to be left in the bargain bin.

Mau5 in the hau5

Although his music and distinctive likeness were featured *DJ Hero 2*, progressive house superstar Joel Zimmerman – aka deadmau5 – does not have a lot of nice things to say about DJs or DJ-ing. "I don't really see the technical merit in playing two songs at the same speed together," he said in a 2008 interview with the Irish Daily Star, before he starred in *DJH2*. "It bores me to [funking] tears."



RECOMMENDED F1 2010 9
CODEMASTERS
A white-knuckle racer and an authentic title. Heaps better with a Logitech wheel.

Midnight Club: Los Angeles 7
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
Visually weak, but sprawling and busy locale.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers 9
UNITED FRONT GAMES
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

MotoGP 10/11 6
MONUMENTAL GAMES
Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

MotorStorm 10
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Fast, hard and dirty. Things have come on a lot since 2007 though.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MotorStorm Apocalypse 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

MX vs. ATV Alive 5
RAINEBOW STUDIOS
A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 9
CRITERION GAMES
Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

Nail'd 7
TECHLAND
Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer that needed a bit more dev time.

RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed 9
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Tops even *GT5* in many crucial areas. Features Mount Panorama.

RECOMMENDED Pure 9
BLACK ROCK STUDIOS
One of the best arcade racers on the market.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID 9
CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good but lacks the *Race Driver* vintage, despite the name.

SBK 2011 7
MILESTONE
Fairly similar to the last one, but with a new Challenge mode and tweaked handling.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second 8
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

SuperCar Challenge 7
EUTECHNYX
Admirable effort but feels a little bland.

Superstars V8: Next Challenge 7
MILESTONE
An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

Test Drive Unlimited 2 7
EDEN GAMES
Massive and ambitious but the cars handle like go-karts in glue. Second-rate visuals, too.

RECOMMENDED WRC 8
MILESTONE
Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully robust driving model.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol 5
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

Ar tonelico Qoga: Knell of Ar Ciel 7
GUST
Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

Cross Edge 3
COMPILE HEART
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

DC Universe Online 7
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
Pretty but shallow, and expensive subs too.

Dungeon Siege III 6
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Sluggish combat and an arse-backwards upgrade system. Quite pretty, though.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins 9
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II 8
BIOWARE
Accessible but lacks immersion. One step forward and two steps back from *Origins*.

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Simply put: awesome.

Hyperdimension Neptunia 8
IDEA FACTORY
A pastiche on modern videogames. Very, very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

ESSENTIAL Fallout 3 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's *Oblivion* in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and it's utterly brilliant.

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas 8
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII 8
SQUARE ENIX
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action but missing a little magic.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 7
VICARIOUS VISIONS
Button-mash-tastic. Compelling for a while.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2 10
BIOWARE
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi. An action RPG without peer.

Resonance of Fate 6
TRI-ACE
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel 6
ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

Valkyria Chronicles 8
SEGA WDW
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

White Knight Chronicles II 7
LEVEL 5/JAPAN STUDIO
A JRPG for those who like to grind.

SHOOTER

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator 9
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

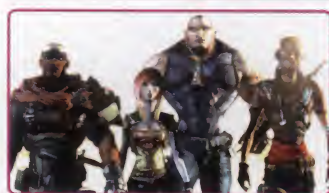
RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A top-tier shooter with a deeply dedicated online community, but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 8
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2 9
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spiced to near-perfection.

BlackSite: Area 51 5
MIDWAY STUDIOS - AUSTIN
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.

NEW Bodycount 3
CODEMASTERS
Fundamentally broken and largely pointless.



BORDERLANDS 9
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4
"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result: the most rewarding co-op to date, and there's a stack of great DLC for it too. Great value."

RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway 8
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made, and certainly the most realistic.

Brink 7
SPLASH DAMAGE
Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

Bulletstorm 7
PEOPLE CAN FLY
Inventive but saves the best stuff for the final couple of hours. Graphically struggles, too.

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare 10
INFINITY WARD
It's still relentlessly exciting.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 10
INFINITY WARD
Like three games stuffed into one. We still love the co-op Spec Ops mode.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops 9
TREYARCH
A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War 10
TREYARCH
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood 7
TECHLAND
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter that's better than you probably think.

NEW Call of Juarez: The Cartel 4
TECHLAND
Hackneyed ideas with AI from the last century. Dopey multiplayer, too.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena 8
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot 9
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2 9
CRYTEK
Diabolically pretty and challenging, and a welcome reprieve from corridor shooters. Demands your intelligence and grit.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Hopefully the sequel rocks this hard.

The Pied Sniper

Simo Häyhä – nicknamed 'The White Death' – was a Finnish sharpshooter active during the Soviet invasion of Finland in 1939-40. Operating in temperatures as low as 40°C, he is thought to have racked up over 700 kills in a period of 100 days, making him the most successful (lethal) sniper in the history of modern warfare. Over 500 of those kills were made with an unmodified scope-less bolt-action rifle.



NEW RECOMMENDED Deus Ex: Human Revolution 8
EIDOS MONTREAL
Stunning design, a great protagonist and dozens of hours of gameplay. The dodgy AI and average character models sully it, though.

F.E.A.R. 8
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS
A chilling ride, but a bit ugly now.

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin 7
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

F.E.A.R. 3 6
DAY 1 STUDIOS
Capable but unspectacular. Also, not scary.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

Haze 6
FREE RADICAL DESIGN
Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal AI.

RECOMMENDED Homefront 8
KAOS STUDIOS
Polished but blink-and-you'll-miss-it single player. A fine alternative to CoD multi, though.

ESSENTIAL Killzone 2 10
GUERRILLA GAMES
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3 9
GUERRILLA GAMES
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline. It's also a winner with Move.

Legendary 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
A rushed mess. Terrible.

RECOMMENDED MAG 9
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor 8
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge 8
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising 8
CODEMASTERS
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River 8
CODEMASTERS
A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box 9
EA UK / VALVE
Get it for Portal, keep it for Half-Life 2.

RECOMMENDED Portal 2 9
VALVE
One of the most brilliant games ever.

Quantum of Solace 7
TREYARCH
Has too many faults to be compelling.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man 10
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A fantastic launch title with sweet weapons.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

Rogue Warrior 3
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

Singularity 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 5
CITY INTERACTIVE
The novelty will be enough for sniper fans. Regular shooter folk won't be able to forgive its sloppy execution.

TimeShift 6
SABER INTERACTIVE
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Not as good or as cool as the first one.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
Scrappy throughout. Great concept, bogus execution

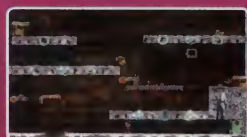
SPORTS

2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa 7
EA CANADA
FIFA 10 with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

AFL Live 6
BIG ANT
Does a decent job of things and it's better than Rugby League Live.



THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation®Store



BRAID
DEVELOPER: HOTHEAD
PLAYERS: 1
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming. It's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man.



PIXELJUNK SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
Take control of a tiny ship and navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics thrown into the mix, such as fluid water and lava dynamics that need to be used to solve puzzles.



FLIGHT CONTROL HD
DEVELOPER: FIREMINT
PLAYERS: 1-4
Possibly the most addictive and accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it – but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



PAC-MAN CE DX
DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
More than an update, this is a revolution. The 'CE' stands for 'Championship Edition', and is a mash of different maps and modes revolving around guiding Paccers through the dots and waiting ghosts. This is begging to be your new addiction.



PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES
DEVELOPER: POPCAP GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
The smash hit on PC lands on PSN, and this tower defense title plays beautifully with a controller. You have a variety of plants to defend your end of the lawn while the undead shuffle and eat their way across. Extremely addictive and actually loaded with braaains.

Balls!

Each year approximately 300 million tennis balls are produced, resulting in something like 20,000 metric tons of non-biodegradable rubber waste. In light of this, some pretty cool projects have been devised to recycle this – like, for example, a Wimbledon initiative in which discarded balls are repurposed as field homes for the threatened Eurasian harvest mouse. N'aaaaw!



Ashes Cricket 2009
TRANSMISSION GAMES
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

Backbreaker
NATURALMOTION
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

Beijing 2008
EUROCOM
Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

EA Sports MMA
EA TIBURON
Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



FIFA 11
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22
"While *FIFA 12* looms, *FIFA 11* remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few *FIFA* updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. This is the best-selling sports game in the world and it's not hard to see why."

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion
EA CANADA
Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

International Cricket 2010
TRICKSTAR GAMES
Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

John Daly's ProStroke Golf
GUSTO GAMES
Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11
VISUAL CONCEPTS / KUSH GAMES
Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

RECOMMENDED NBA Jam
EA CANADA
A faithful and fun update to the '90s classic. He's on fire!

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011
KONAMI
Good for a goal fix, still second best overall. Get *FIFA 11*.

Rugby League Live
BIG ANT
Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate. The Melbourne crew at Big Ant did a slightly better job with *AFL Live*.

Shaun White Skateboarding
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

Shaun White Snowboarding
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

Skate
EA BLACK BOX
A well-balanced masterpiece and true *Tony Hawk* killer. Trumped by its sequels.

RECOMMENDED Skate 2
EA BLACK BOX
One of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime.

RECOMMENDED Skate 3
EA BLACK BOX
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

RECOMMENDED Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12
EA TIBURON
Great golf game but we don't like the way the day one DLC is teased via the career mode.

Tony Hawk's Project 8
NEVERSOFT
No real reason to revisit this post-*Skate* at all.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground
NEVERSOFT
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

Tony Hawk: RIDE
ROBOMODO
Pure frustration made plastic.

RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4
2K CZECH
More accessible than its predecessor with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010
YUKE'S
The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

Vancouver 2010
EUROCOM
A handful of events that last one afternoon.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4
SUMO DIGITAL
Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution
FIRAXIS GAMES
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E.
EUGEN SYSTEMS
Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

The Sims 3
THE SIMS STUDIO
Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

Stormrise
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
A cack-handed, future war mess.

Tom Clancy's EndWar
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Far from a finished product. Works, but it's hardly an essential purchase.

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

2004:
GOD HAND

CONSOLE: PS2 GENRE: BEAT-EM-UP DEVELOPER: CLOVER STUDIO
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$25-30 (EBAY)



Developed by Shinji Mikami and the team responsible for *Resident Evil 4*, *God Hand* is a hardcore beat-em-up unlike any other: brutal, hilarious, and totally insane. It's a divisive game, inspiring slavish devotion and sneering ridicule in equal measure. Simply put, it's not a game for everyone – nor is it meant to be.

Chronicling the adventures of a wandering martial artist in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, *God Hand*'s chief virtue is its deep and flexible combat system, which allows you to assign unique attacks to specific face buttons, thereby creating your own move sets and combos. The range of moves available is astronomical and encompasses a wide variety of different martial arts, meaning you can seamlessly segue from a simple jab to a punishing snap kick to a drunken-monkey style palm strike in a single combo. It's a clever system that engenders a sense of ownership seldom seen in beat-em-ups, or indeed action games in general. In permitting you to customise your moves in this way, *God Hand* encourages you to develop your own style, your own approach, your own unique way of playing the game.

It takes time, though. *God Hand* is not a game you can jump into straight away, nor is it a game that will cut you any slack on account of your inexperience. You know how, in most games, the first level is basically a cakewalk designed to

introduce basic mechanics and gently ease you into the flow of play? Not in *God Hand*. In *God Hand* the first level is a grim death march of repeated failure and frustration. You will die, and die, and die again. You will die so frequently and so easily that you will begin to wonder whether it's possible to do anything but. Have courage, friends – it only gets harder from here.

For the hardcore, *God Hand*'s punishing difficulty is a boon – how often does a game come along that has the balls to kick the crap out of you in the very first level? However, for the more casual among us, it is perhaps all a bit too much. And that's fine. After all, we can't all be good at videogames. If *God Hand* is too much for you to handle, then maybe you can take up another hobby. Knitting, perhaps. Or pottery.

That's a joke. *God Hand* is full of jokes. Its bizarre, highly idiosyncratic sense of humour is one of its defining characteristics and one of the key reasons it has gained such a strong cult following. Those of you who've played the very excellent *Bayonetta* or the so-so *Shadows of the Damned* (also Shinji Mikami joints) will have a pretty good idea of what we're talking about: lots of non-sequiturs, pop-culture references, and vaguely disturbing dick and butt jokes.

Also, dancing! And songs! I don't want to spoil anything, but *God Hand* has a song at the end that blows the famous "Portal songs" completely out of the water. Even if you have no intention of playing the game, look it up on YouTube – it is AMAZING.

GAME (C)LOVER

God Hand was the last game released by Clover Studio. Though the Japanese developer enjoyed considerable critical success with innovative titles like *Viewtiful Joe* and *Okami*, commercial prosperity remained frustratingly elusive, eventually prompting parent company Capcom to close the studio on October 12, 2006 – just two days after *God Hand* was released in America. Bummer. Some of its staff went on to Platinum Games, Game Republic, or just went freelance.

Next month

REVIEWED! ▶

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Naughty Dog go for
three from three to
take out PlayStation
game of the year!

PLUS

Exclusive access to
Final Fantasy XIII-2

Lord of the Rings:
War in the North,
RAGE, Twisted Metal
and WRC2 reviewed!

Assassin's Creed
Revelations

Catherine

Saints Row: The Third

Updates from Tokyo
Games Show

and much more!

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Disclaimer: OPS will do everything to deliver this content next month but we can't be held at fault if things go awry or scheduled games slip and miss our deadline!

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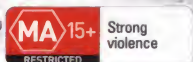
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